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In the days of St.Clair

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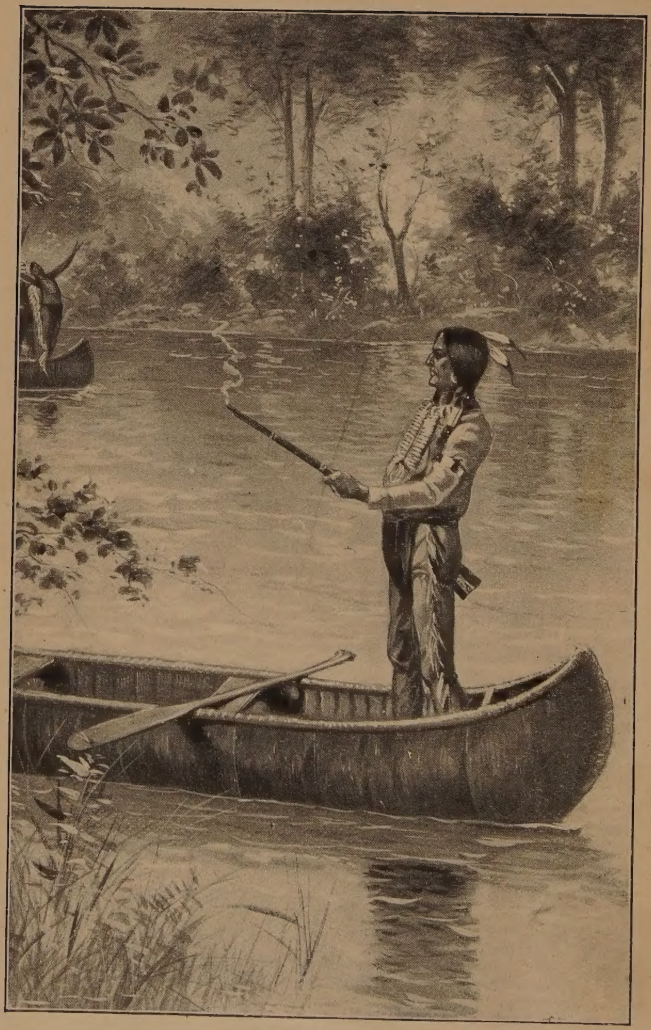

The lone warrior was Silverheels

IN THE DAYS OF ST. CLAIR

A Romance of the Muskingum Valley

BY

DR. JAMES BALL NAYLOR

Author of "RALPH MARLOWE,"
"THE SIGN OF THE PROPHET." etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY W. H. FRY

AKRON, OHIO

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Dedication

To the memory of
the sturdy and courageous pioneers,
who lost their lives in
the Big Bottom Massacre,
this volume is respectfully dedicated.

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CHAPTER I

IT was the autumn of seventeen hundred and eighty-nine. The morning sun stood tiptoe on the ramparts of the Blue Ridge and hurled his javelins into the peaceful valley of the Shenandoah. Clouds of dun-colored fog — like smoke from a burning city — arose from the bosom of the Shenandoah itself, and floated lazily over the adjoining fields and woods. Rose-colored beacon lights of dawn began to appear upon the crest of the Alleghenies; and here and there along the valley columns of blue smoke shot heavenward, indicating that the inhabitants were astir and the war of day was on.

Midway between the dancing waters of the river and the foothills, was the Lovelace mansion; and upon its broad veranda stood a young woman. She was tall and queenly. Her raven hair, soft and silken in texture, was gathered in a loose coil at the back of her head, and her sloe-black eyes — that could harden and flash with pride or anger, or soften and glow with love or pity — were bent upon the bright river several miles away. One white and shapely hand shielded her eyes from the slanting arrows of the sun, while the other rested upon the railing of the veranda. A black gown of soft woolen accentuated the whiteness of her skin — in

which there was no hint of sallowness — and swaying in the crisp breeze, revealed the matchless contour of her limbs. The white neckerchief that encircled her slender neck was folded upon her breast and fastened with a small brooch of gold.

A few moments she stood motionless, her gaze riveted upon the river, the fog that overhung it, and the distant range of the Blue Ridge that appeared as a low-lying cloud-bank against the brightening sky. Then she turned, and, walking to the end of the veranda, directed her attention toward the stables at the back of the house. She smiled involuntarily as there came to her ears:

"Oh, Marse Paul! Marse Paul! Fo' de Lo'd's sake hurry!"

She continued to smile as she murmured to herself:

"The silly black! He seems to be greatly excited about something. What can be the matter?"

"Marse Paul! Marse Paul! De bay filly's got 'er fo' foot in de manger, an' she's jes' ramshacklin' eb'ryt'ing!"

The young woman heard the excited tones of the negro, the sound of shod hoofs upon the floor of the stable, and the crash of breaking planks. Her smile faded, and hard lines took its place.

"What's the matter here, Gumbo?" cried a cheery voice.

"Fo' de Lo'd, Marse Paul, de filly's got *bofe* 'er

feet in de manger, an' I can't do a t'ing wid 'er! 'Deed an' dat's a fack!"

Apparently the mare ceased her struggles and stood still, for the young woman heard no further noise. Her harsh look gave way to one of melting tenderness.

"Ah, Paul, how I love you!" she whispered, clasping her strong white hands in front of her. "I'd travel barefoot over red-hot coals to win you, were it necessary. And you *must* be mine! I have loved you long!"

Her black eyes were moist and her bosom was heaving with emotion. She saw two horsemen riding from the stables toward the house, and she descended the steps to greet them. One of the riders was a young man of twenty-five years, tall, straight and sinewy. His face was smooth-shaven and his brown hair fell in ringlets upon his shoulders. His laughing blue eyes denoted a merry, good natured disposition, while his square jaws and firm mouth were indicative of high moral courage and imperious will power. A broad-brimmed soft hat surmounted his brown curls, and a cloak of blue cloth, fastened at the neck with a clasp, fell about his shoulders. The horse that he bestrode was a black of fine form and great beauty; and he sat the animal with the easy grace of one accustomed to the saddle. His companion, a middle-aged negro, was mounted upon a restive, high-stepping bay mare. A bullet-pouch

and powder-horn hung at the slave's side, and a long rifle rested upon the pummel of his saddle.

"Good morning, cousin," was Paul Graydon's greeting, as he cantered up to the fence and doffed his hat.

Hester Lovelace smiled winsomely upon him, as she answered:

"Good morning — a most beautiful morning! Where now, Paul?"

"I'm going to join Isaac Meeks in a bear-hunt among the mountain laurel bushes," returned the young man, as he reined in his steed and patted its glossy neck

A shade of annoyance swept over Hester's lovely features, but it was gone as she inquired:

"What occasioned the uproar at the stables just now?"

"Bess was indulging in one of her tantrums; and I suppose Gumbo attempted to chastise her," he said smiling.

Miss Lovelace looked very grave as she asked:

"Paul, don't you think you are too lenient with the slaves sometimes — especially with Gumbo?"

"It may be, Hester," he admitted, rather reluctantly, "but I'm *what* I am. I wasn't born for a slave driver — I don't like it. I'd rather lead than drive. However, I shan't have it to do for long."

"What do you mean, Paul?" she asked, opening her black eyes very wide.

"This, Hester: I've eaten the bread of idleness

too long; too long I've led an aimless existence. My uncle, your kind father — peace to his ashes — gave me a home, reared and educated me. I've no right to expect more. I must go out into the world, armed with ambition, energy and good health, and hew out a road to success. I can't respect myself fully until I've done so."

All this he said in a manly, decided way that left no shadow of doubt in regard to his real intentions. Hester watched him narrowly as he spoke, studying his every expression and gesture. Her own face expressed surprise, incredulity, and downright anger in turn. When he had finished she asked coldly:

"Are you tired of staying with us, Paul?"

"Not at all, Hester," he replied quickly. "You know it's not that — "

She interrupted him with:

"Why go, then?"

"For the reasons I've given."

"They're neither good nor sufficient."

He looked at her in surprise and began:

"I don't understand you, Hester. I — "

Again she broke in on him:

"Let me explain, cousin. You say that my father gave you a home, reared and educated you. You might have added that he loved you as his own son. My mother has been your mother, my father has been your father. You and I have been as brother and sister. Now, when my — *our* father is dead and

our mother is an invalid, when the management of the large estate devolves upon you and me, *you* propose to go away and leave me to bear the burden alone. Surely you've a strange way of showing gratitude, Paul."

Tears were in her eyes. Her voice was trembling. She stood unmasked before Paul Graydon, but he was too blind to see. He did not understand that her tears were tears of love and mortification; he did not realize that she had shown him her woman's heart. Well as he knew her, accustomed as he was to all her moods, he did not understand her now. He thought that her emotion had been caused by the mention of her dead father.

"Hester, I can't consent to stay here much longer." He spoke kindly but firmly. "Don't misunderstand me; I'm not ungrateful. You've been very kind to me. But when a man reaches the age of twenty-five years, it behooves him to think of procuring home and substance for himself. The life I'm leading here — that of a gentleman of leisure — is a pleasant one. But I'm accomplishing nothing. You say that if I go away, I leave the care of the estate to you alone. I don't flatter myself that you'll feel the loss very greatly. You can readily obtain a better overseer. As you've said, I'm too easy with the field-hands and servants."

Hester Lovelace strove with conflicting emotions. She loved her handsome cousin. Her passion was one of slow growth but overmastering power. She

had no idea of giving him up — of permitting him to go out into the world beyond her influence. She was angry that he had not understood her. Yet she was ashamed to put her meaning in plainer language. Did Paul love her as she loved him? She did not know — she scarcely dared to think. A happy thought came to her. She was rich, Paul was poor. Perhaps that was the reason he had never spoken of love. She would make one more effort. She leaned across the low fence of whitewashed palings, and smoothed his horse's glossy coat, as she said in a low, intense tone:

"You shan't entertain such ideas for a moment. Father's dead, mother's an invalid. This vast property will soon be yours and mine. There's enough for you and me both. There's no excuse for your going, Paul."

He drew himself up proudly: "Hester — cousin, do you think me base enough to rob you of your own?"

"If you don't accept what I offer — offer you with all my heart, you do rob me, indeed!"

There was a world of meaning in her tone, and her black eyes turned full upon him. Something of the truth flashed through his mind; but he cast the thought aside as unworthy.

"Rob you by leaving you?" he ejaculated, gazing into her upturned face.

"Yes."

"Of what Hester?"

"Of yourself!"

He could misunderstand her no longer. Her face and neck were suffused with hot blushes, as she dropped her head and tapped the earth, with her slippered foot. Paul Graydon was greatly embarrassed. He shifted his position in the saddle, and nervously knotted the rein in his hand. He regarded Hester as a sister, and he loved her — but not in the sense that she loved him. He laughed uneasily — a forced, artificial laugh; and attempted to speak, but his voice stuck in his throat. His words sounded hollow and insincere, as he said:

"You'll not miss me greatly, Hester. You'll be lonely for a time, no doubt; we've been long together. But time heals all wounds. I must get me to Isaac Meek's house, however, or he'll grow weary of waiting and start upon the hunt, alone."

She thought that he had misinterpreted her language, and quickly recovered her composure; for she was humiliated that she had laid bare her heart before him. She must say something. Already he was gathering up the reins. With a miserable attempt at a smile, she asked:

"Why do you associate with Isaac Meeks, Paul? He's far beneath you."

He was pleased and relieved that she had abandoned the subject of their conversation, and answered readily and carelessly:

"I don't regard him as an associate or friend,

Hester. He appears to be an honest, good-natured fellow, and is a skillful guide and hunter."

"Is that all the interest you have in him or his family?"

He hesitated a moment, and became aware that she yas keenly scrutinizing him.

"Yes; that is all."

She said not another word, but continued to look him full in the face.

"Why do you ask?" he inquired, slightly irritated at her manner.

"You're more interested in the fair Marie, than in her uncle," was her unexpected rejoinder.

Paul's face flushed, and he could not look her in the eyes.

"Hester!" was all that he could say.

She clapped her hands and laughed a harsh, grating laugh.

"You stand convicted!" she cried.

"What do you mean?" he managed to inquire.

"That you love Marie Fontanelle! I've long suspected it; now you've told me. So you wish to go out into the world, to build a nest for your gay bird. It yould be cruel in me to hinder you!" And a faint sneer curled her thin lips.

"I've not said I mean to marry Miss Fontanelle," he replied coldly.

"You've said that you love her."

"Hester! When?"

"Just now. Your face told what your tongue re-

fused to tell. You love her — what matter? It's naught to me that you mean to ruin your life by marrying a French woman. Go — go to her! She is waiting for you — she of the noble pedigree! A slattern Meeks for her mother, and a French trader for her father!"

She was beside herself with rage and shame. Seeing that neither explanation nor argument would prove availing, he gathered up the reins and, dashing the spurs into his steed, galloped from her sight. She watched him with dry eyes until he disappeared at the turn of the road. Then she covered her face with her hands and wept silently.

CHAPTER II

THE fog had lifted from the river, and the sun was climbing the eastern arc of the heavens. The negroes were singing and working in the tobacco fields. To the right and to the left of the mansion, half-naked pickaninnies were gamboling and laughing in the warm sunshine. A restless catbird squawked and complained over the advent of autumn, as it hopped from limb to limb of the quince bush in the corner of the garden. The shaggy watchdog — toothless, old and feeble — trotted to her side, and, raising his gray muzzle, begged for a caress. But Hester heard and saw nothing. At last, with slow footsteps, she entered the house.

The Lovelace plantation included some of the best farming and grazing lands in the valley of the Shenandoah — "the garden spot of Virginia." It consisted of several thousand acres of hill and bottom, and stretched from the foothills of the Alleghenies to within a few miles of the river.

The mansion — if it merited so dignified a name — was large and rambling. It had been builded piecemeal. Originally a double hewed-log house of two stories, the outside had later on been weather-boarded, and from time to time additions had been

made to it, as the needs or fancy of its owner dictated. It was unpainted and weatherstained. Its immense whitewashed chimneys of undressed stone, on the outside of the structure, were in strange and glaring contrast to its gray exterior. A low, broad veranda extended along two sides of the house, and stone steps led down to the flag-paved walks. Back of the residence were the stables and other outbuildings; and to the right and to the left of it — scattered along the country highway — were the negro quarters.

The interior of the mansion was suggestive of the birthplace of its original owner. The polished oaken floors, the wide and deep fireplaces, the smoke-stained joists and wainscotings, the cumbrous carved funiture, and the heavy brass andirons and candlesticks, gave the impression of an English country-house of the period.

George Lovelace, Hester's father, was the younger son of an English nobleman. At the age of twenty-seven he married, and with money inherited from his mother's estate he came to America to seek his fortune. He bought this tract of land in the Shenandoah valley, and cleared and improved the estate. Here Hester, the only child, was born twenty-three years before the opening of our story. Several years after her birth, Mr. Lovelace went to England; and on his return brought back with him his dead sister's son, Paul Graydon. The "bonnie English laddie," as his uncle lovingly called him,

found a place in his aunt's motherly heart, became the baby Hester's constant companion and playmate, and waxed fair and lusty under the genial Virginia skies.

As has been said, Paul and Hester were inseparable from the day of his arrival. As children, they romped and frolicked about the gray mansion; a little older grown, they explored the fields and woods together; and not until he had reached young manhood and she young womanhood, were they ever long apart.

Then he went to college in New England, while she stayed at home under the instruction of a private teacher. When he returned after graduating, they promptly resumed their old relationship. Both were strong-willed and imperious — both English to the core — and the clash of steel on steel was not an infrequent occurrence. When the battle ceased, however, the participants were better friends than before. One gave ground and yielded the contested point as frequently as the other; and after each encounter, each had the good sense to refrain from mentioning the cause of their wordy duel, or the result of it.

As the years passed, Paul's love for Hester grew stronger — but it was the protecting love of a brother. Not so with her love for him. It underwent a change — a wonderful transformation. At first, she was barely aware of it. She felt that Paul was nearer and dearer to her than ever before, that the

skies were bluer and the flowers fairer for his presence — and that she was unhappy when he was absent. Then she realized that she grew jealous if another woman — especially if the woman were young and beautiful — showed even a passing interest in him. What did it all mean? She propounded the question to herself many times. At last the startling truth flashed upon her that she regarded her handsome cousin as a lover.

From that time onward she looked upon Paul as her future husband. She did not stop to ask if *he* loved *her* — had not he been kind and loving always? Of course he would ask her to be his wife sometime. Not until her cousin began to go upon frequent hunts with Isaac Meeks, and to spend days away from her, did she begin to question the character of his love.

On an ill-fated day she met Marie Fontanelle, Isaac Meeks's niece, and was surprised at the girl's almost angelic beauty, so different from her own. Paul frequently went to the Meeks place. Had he fallen in love with the dainty forest flower? She trembled with apprehension. Was this French girl — this daughter of an adventurous trader — to take from her all the sunshine of existence? She would not permit it — and she stamped her little foot in rage!

From that time forward, she exercised every power to win and keep her cousin. She was a fascinating woman, and she knew it. She bent all her ener-

gies to her task. She welcomed him home with a smile, and sped him on his journey with a lingering caress. She consulted him in everything, and did her best to make him understand that he was necessary to her very existence. She read to him, she dressed to please him. But she failed to hold him. Slowly but surely he drifted away from her.

She could not stand that. She grew jealous and unhappy. She vented her displeasure upon the unoffending slaves; was moody and silent in the presence of her mother; and at times treated Paul in a cold and distant manner. Paul, blind to everything but his love for Marie Fontanelle, scarcely noticed Hester's changed demeanor. He treated her, as he had always done, with courtesy and respect; showed her the same attentive kindness and felt for her the same old brotherly love. All this was just what she did *not* want. She grew desperate, and, on the morning that opens our story, unmasked her heart to him.

When Hester entered the house, after Paul's departure, she found her mother half reclining upon a stiff-backed sofa in front of the white hearth. The sun was warm without, but within the air would have been cool, had it not been for the bright fire that blazed in the wide fireplace. Caroline Lovelace was a pale, white-haired woman, whose face — drawn and seamed with the indelible lines of great suffering — still showed traces of former beauty. She was tall, thin and worn; and the white hands

that lay listlessly in her lap had a semi-transparent appearance. She was gazing into the depths of the gentle blaze with a far-away look in her dark eyes. Glancing up — as her daughter drew a chair toward the fire — she asked:

"Where have you been, child? You look blue and cold."

"Out on the front veranda," Hester answered, without looking at her mother.

"You're shivering — are you sick?" Mrs. Lovelace inquired, with concern.

"I'm not sick" — The answer came in a cold, inflexible tone — "but I don't feel very well. Please don't talk to me, mother."

"Hester, what's the matter? You're sick — I know you are. Don't be afraid of alarming me; tell me what ails you."

"Mother, I'm *not* sick — I wish that I were — I wish that I could die! I'm tired — tired of life!"

"Hester Lovelace!" was all that her mother could exclaim, as she slowly and feebly arose to a sitting posture. She looked at her daughter in silence for some time; but Hester did not deign to reply.

"My child, don't you know that it's very wicked to talk as you've been doing?"

Hester could restrain herself no longer. She turned upon her parent, and in a tornado of passion cried:

"Mother, I know nothing of the kind! It's *not* wicked to tell the truth; and I *am* tired of life — for

I've nothing left to live for. You don't know — you *can't* know — what I feel! Oh, I'm so unhappy — *so miserably* unhappy!"

She buried her face in her hands, while her form shook. Mrs. Lovelace was puzzled and alarmed. She had noticed for some time that Hester was not herself; but she had never seen her give way to such a storm of passion. They were very like, this mother and daughter. Each was willful and self-reliant; neither was of a confiding disposition. For this reason they had never known the intimate relationship that had existed between daughter and father. Mrs. Lovelace did not know of Hester's love for Paul, and was at a loss to account for her strange behavior. Now she said, as she wearily sank back upon the cushions:

"Come here, dear — I can't come to you! Come and tell me your troubles; perhaps I can help and comfort you."

Hester had partly recovered her composure; and, apparently, was coldly indifferent to her mother's appeal. Her indifference was assumed, however. She felt that she *must* tell some one — and the kind, indulgent father to whom she had always gone was dead. She hesitated.

Mrs. Lovelace went on:

"Come, dear! Your father's gone now, and you must make a confident of me. We've not been to each other what we should have been. Let us start anew and aright. I, too, have something that's

worrying me very much — something that I want to tell you. Come, dear!"

She held out her arms toward her daughter, and said this last pleadingly. Hester's heart was touched. Was her patient, long-suffering mother in trouble, too? The young woman burst into tears, and dropping upon her knees beside the sofa hid her face in her mother's lap. Mrs. Lovelace gently and caressingly stroked the girl's dark hair, until the latter ceased her weeping, and, looking up with a half smile, inquired:

"What is it, mother?"

"You want to know what troubles me?"

"Yes."

"Tell me first of your own troubles, dear child. You're so changed — you're not your old self."

"Tell me first, mother; you know how hard it is for *me* to confide."

"Well," replied Mrs. Lovelace, slowly, "take a seat here, Hester, and let's talk calmly. We can help and comfort each other, perhaps. I'm failing and must leave you alone soon."

The daughter raised her hand deprecatingly, but the mother paid no heed.

"I'm much concerned about your future, and would see you well married and settled in life before I die. Your cousin Paul's a clean and honorable young man, and you've known each other intimately for years. You'll need some one to help you in the management of the estate. Who could assist you

so well as Paul? I feel confident he loves you, Hester, and that in the near future he'll ask you to be his wife. I used to think you loved him, child; and was happy in the thought that he whom I've regarded as a son would be my son indeed. But, of late, I've thought you don't love him as a woman should love the man she marries. It was your dear father's wish that Paul should be your husband, Hester. Is the thought unwelcome to you?"

Hester was astonished at her mother's want of discernment. She could have laughed aloud in scorn. She burst forth:

"Mother, you're blind — blind! What but my love for Paul has been burning as a consuming fire within me, for months? What but my love for him has caused me to treat him as I have? I am almost crazed with grief and humiliation, for he does not love me. He loves another!"

Mrs. Lovelace stared hard at her daughter. "Hester, is this true — do you love Paul?"

"Haven't I told you, mother?"

"And he loves another?"

"It's true."

"Her name, Hester?"

"Marie Fontanelle."

"Who's Marie Fontanelle, pray?"

"A niece of Isaac Meeks, the hunter, who lives up in the foothills."

"A coarse and vulgar backwoods wench!"

"Far from it, mother! She is lovely, but she

comes of plebian stock. Her mother was a Meeks — poor, illiterate whites — and her father, an adventurous French trader. But what matters her origin? Paul's infatuated with her; and talks of leaving us and going out into the world, to seek his fortune."

Hester spoke in a hopeless tone that went straight to her mother's heart. Mrs. Lovelace closed her dark eyes, until they looked like two black slits in the whiteness of her face, compressed her pale lips and asked:

"How do you know all this, Hester?"

"I've picked it out of Paul, bit by bit. This morning I surprised him, by accusing him of loving her; and his face revealed the secret. It's too true, mother!"

Caroline Lovelace's face was a study. Little by little the look of habitual calm forsook it, as the tempest gathered. Rage corrugated her brows; and from her eyes flashed an indomitable will that brooked no opposition.

"The beggar!" she hissed between her set teeth. "How dare he flout you, my daughter, with the blood of English peers in your veins and with your rich dowry? The dolt! to go daft over the insipid beauty of a half-breed French huzzy! Has he no memory for all he owes to us? He scorns your love! Very well, we shall see! Leave it all to me, child; he shall be yours. I think that I shall have no trouble in bringing him to his senses — and to your feet. Bah, the fool!"

Hester Lovelace's face brightened. She saw that she had an earnest and powerful ally in her mother. The younger woman bent down and kissed the upturned face. And in the compact sealed by that kiss was a world of trouble for Paul Graydon and Marie Fontanelle.

CHAPTER III

PAUL overtook Gumbo at the turn of the road; and together they cantered forward at a brisk pace. The sunshine was warm and genial; the air was crisp and clear. It was one of those rare autumn mornings that bring the glow of health to the invalid's cheek and make the blood dance and tingle in the veins of the healthy. Paul rode with bent head and downcast eyes, giving little heed to the beauties of the morning. He was engrossed with his own thoughts — and bitter enough they were. He realized at last that his haughty cousin looked upon him as a lover; and he realized as fully that for him the world held but one woman — and that woman was little Marie Fontanelle.

His horse stumbled, and Paul, riding with loosened rein, almost lost his seat. Mechanically he pulled up the black steed; but his reverie was unbroken.

Gumbo was an observant, quick-witted fellow, and he noticed his young master's mental abstraction. The negro had been Paul's body servant ever since the latter's arrival in America. At that time, Mr. Lovelace said: "Gumbo, this is your young master; see that you take good care of him. Paul,

Gumbo is your servant; if he doesn't obey you, let me know — and I'll have him flogged."

But no flogging did Gumbo ever receive through Paul's tale-bearing. On the contrary, the fair-skinned lad saved the dark-skinned one's back from many a blow. The servant was ten years older than his master. Paul soon learned to love the intelligent, obedient slave; and the latter worshipped the English boy, in a way that was little short of idolatry, and served him with dog-like fidelity.

In the presence of others, Gumbo always showed Paul the respectful deference that was his due. But when alone, the two chatted and laughed in an undignified way that was quite shocking to Hester — if she chanced to come upon them. As the years passed, Gumbo regarded Paul as the wisest of men, and honored him accordingly; while the latter looked upon Gumbo as a weaker brother to be loved and protected. It was not at all strange that on this day the servant should observe the master's gloomy silence and remark:

"W'ats de matter, Marse Paul? You seems kin' ob dumfouzled — you does."

Gumbo's dialect was original with himself. It was neither the pure English of the Lovelaces nor the broad *patois* of the field hands, but a mixture of the two; and it was very unstable. At times it resembled the one extreme; again it closely approached the other. In addition he interlarded and embellished his conversation with resonant polysyl-

labic words. It mattered not that he did not know their meaning or that they were verbal monstrosities, the like of which was never known before — he loved them as a mother loves her children, and held them up for public admiration. So, when he accused Paul of seeming "dumfouzled," his meaning was beyond human comprehension.

"I declar'! Marse Paul, you *mus'* be dumfouzled; you doesn't hear nuffin I says."

Paul looked up and asked:

"Were you speaking to me, Gumbo?"

"Were I speakin' to you! Marse Paul, you's clean decrastinated whar you am. W'at in de worl's de matter wid you?"

The younger man smiled in spite of himself. Gumbo's absurdities were refreshing.

"I was thinking," he answered as he unfastened his cloak and flung it loose from his neck.

"Is you in trouble, Marse Paul?"

"I am worried, Gumbo — that is all."

"W'at erbout?"

"I may not tell you all, but I'm going to leave here soon; and probably I shall never come back. I must seek a home for myself, elsewhere."

"Whar you gwine?"

"I don't know yet — back to England, perhaps."

"Co'se you'll take me, Marse Paul. I couldn't stay here widout you, nohow — 'deed I couldn't."

"When I go, Gumbo, I must leave you behind. I cannot —"

"Doesn't I belong to you, Marse Paul?"

"Yes, but —"

"Den wa't you mean by abscodin' me in dat fashion? I'se gwine wid you, Marse Paul —dat's all!"

Gumbo said this with an obstinate shake of his woolly head.

"Surely you wouldn't wish to leave Hester and Aunt Caroline?" Paul remarked, the shadow of a smile flitting about his beardless lips.

"Does *you* want to leave 'em, Marse Paul?" was the negro's answer.

"No; but I'm compelled to go — you're not."

Paul was arguing the question with his servant simply to divert his own thoughts, and not with the intent of convincing the black. But Gumbo was in dead earnest, and thus replied:

"Isn't de dorg dispelled to trabel wid his master? Does you dispose fo' a minute, Marse Paul, dat I's gwine to let you go 'way widout me to take keer ob you?"

"Very well — we shall see, Gumbo," Graydon answered; and again relapsed into his moody reverie. The negro was not satisfied.

"W'at you gwine fo', Marse Paul?"

"To seek my fortune," answered the other without looking up.

"Isn't you happy an' distented here?"

"No."

"W'y?"

"I may not tell you. Don't question me further."

"Ol' Marse George meant fo' you to marry Miss Hester, an' sheer de plantation wid 'er."

Paul started.

"How do you know, Gumbo?"

"Bekase dis nigger heerd him an' de ol' missus discoursin' de subjeck, jes' a sho't time 'fo' he died."

Graydon turned upon the slave and said sternly:

"Gumbo, let us drop the subject I'm going away — it doesn't matter why. You are not to mention a word of this to anyone."

They were ascending toward the foot hills of the Alleghenies. The road grew rougher and steeper, dwindled to a mere bypath, along which they were compelled to ride single file, and wound here and there through the intricate labyrinth of the wood. After about an hour of hard riding, they came upon a small clearing among the trees, in the center of which stood a commodious cabin of hewed logs. The ears of the two riders were greeted with a discordant chorus of yelps and barks, as a half dozen mongrel curs came bounding across the open space toward them.

A tall, rawboned mountaineer, gun in hand, was leaning against the corner of the house. The cabin stood upon a small plateau; and at its back rose a rock-ribbed spur of the mountain.

This was the home of Isaac Meeks and family. His landed estate consisted of a few acres of wooded hillside, seamed and furrowed by rocky ravines.

His cabin, cow and a few hogs — not counting his rifle and dogs, which he deemed of vastly more importance — were his earthy all. But Meeks was a contented soul. He required but little to render him happy — and he had it. He cultivated a small plat of ground — or rather his wife and children did — and raised what corn, potatoes and other vegetables the family needed. The cow furnished milk; and what meat the fat porkers, that ran wild in the woods, failed to supply, Meeks procured from the mountains with his trusty rifle. As for the rough clothing, part of it was made from the skins of the wild animals he trapped and shot, and the remainder he procured from farmers in the valley, bartering peltries and wild meat for linsey-woolsey.

His family was composed of his wife and two children, a boy and a girl, aged twelve and ten years respectively, and a niece, Marie Fontanelle. Nancy Meeks, the wife and mother, was as tall, rawboned and ugly as her worthy spouse; but in disposition she differed from him materially. Both were uncouth and illiterate, but possessed of native independence and shrewdness. Here, however, the similarity ended. Mr. Meeks was a born philosopher, who loved to live near to nature's heart and cared for little else. With him, to hunt and trap was the aim and end of existence. He thoroughly enjoyed the primitive life he led. His wants were few, and the woods and streams supplied them. He had no ambition to be other than he was. His only concern

was that the settlements were drawing nearer and nearer to his mountain retreat.

It was far different with his worthy spouse. She wanted to do something and be something in the world. She was energetic and industrious, and longed for the chance to acquire riches. She was discontented with her hard lot, and envied her more fortunate neighbors in the valley. This disposition on his wife's part was a continual source of annoyance to Isaac Meeks She called him lazy and shiftless, and railed at him continually. At first he paid little heed to her words, escaping to the woods when she became too insistent; but of late she had allowed him no peace — neither day nor night — insisting that he sell the little home and emigrate to a more favorable locality, till the poor fellow was almost distracted

Marie Fontanelle was the only child of Isaac Meeks's oldest sister. The girl was lovely, with the fair beauty the old masters loved to paint. Her hair was like threads of virgin gold; and her large blue eyes had in them the tint of the overarching heavens. She was of medium height and perfect in form and feature. In her nature was combined the sturdy virtues and keen common sense of her Virginia mother and the sparkling wit and alert vivacity of her French father She was eighteen years old, and had a fair education for the day and community in which she lived. That she possessed a rudimentary knowledge of books was due to the fact that she had spent

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the first fifteen years of her life with an aunt in Richmond. When this aunt died, Marie came to make her home in the cabin of her uncle, for she had no other relatives.

Some nineteen years before the time of which we write, Jacques Fontanelle, a French fur trader from Canada, found his way into the valley of the Shenandoah. Here he met and loved Ruth Meeks, the rustic belle of the settlement. His love was returned, and a few months after his arrival the two were secretly married. When the Meeks family became aware of it, they were furiously angry, and accused her of everlastingly disgracing the family. It is true that they had nothing to boast of in the way of social prestige, and that honest Jacques Fontanelle was a credit to them; but they considered him the prince of Ishmaelites — for was he not a Frenchman!

The feeling of the Meeks family, toward Fontanelle, will be more readily understood, if it be remembered that his marriage to Ruth occurred a few years after the close of the French and Indian war, and while the war spirit against his nation was still rife in every English settlement. The voluble Frenchman was not lacking in personal courage, and he bitterly and boldly resented the Meeks' interference. The result was an open feud. Jacques was compelled to flee for his life, with a half dozen long rifles belching flame at his heels; and Ruth — dis-

consolate and broken-hearted — died on giving birth to Marie.

"Well, I've been a-waitin' fer you quite a bit. Are you all ready fer the hunt?" was the frank greeting of Meeks to the newcomers, when the dogs had been cowed.

"All ready," was Paul's reply. But he kept looking toward the cabin, and did not show a readiness to depart.

"She ain't there!" chuckled the good-natured Isaac, shouldering his rifle and starting toward the woods; "she's gone down to the corn-patch, to help Nancy shuck out a basket o' corn. You can see her when we come back. Le's mosey — it's gittin' late."

Paul heaved a sigh as he shouldered his rifle. He was not content to go upon the hunt without first seeing Marie.

As the three men disappeared among the trees, Mrs. Meeks and Marie, bearing a basket of corn between them, came around the corner of the cabin and entered the door.

CHAPTER IV

At three o'clock in the afternoon, the men returned, tired and hungry, but bearing in triumph the skin and a part of the carcass of a huge black bear. They partook heartily of the meal, consisting of bear steak, corn bread and milk, that Mrs. Meeks hurriedly prepared for them. Paul saw Marie pick up a heavy wooden pail and start for the spring a hundred yards from the cabin, and he joined her.

"Have the horses in readiness, Gumbo," he said, as he took the pail from Marie's hand and walked at her side.

"All right, Marse Paul," answered the obedient black.

The two young people walked on in silence, toward the spring in the ravine. Marie was the first to speak. Turning her sweet, but troubled, face toward the young man towering above her, she asked:

"You are silent and thoughtful, my Paul. What troubles you?"

He slipped his arm around her waist, and, bending down, kissed her upturned face as he replied:

"I'm in trouble, Marie mine. I must go away and leave you."

She started from his embrace, and a startled look crept into her face. Was Nancy Meeks right, then? Had Paul Graydon been playing with her affections, for his own pastime? Did he mean to leave her, never to return? She could not believe him so base. But what did he mean? Her thoughts were reflected in her countenance; and Paul Graydon read them as from an open book. Opening his arms, he stepped toward her, crying:

"No! A thousand times no, Marie — not that! You do me great injustice. When you've heard all I have to tell you, you'll have no place in your heart for mistrust."

She sprang into his outstretched arms, and, nestling her head upon his bosom, sobbed:

"I *do* love and trust you, Paul! But what does it mean that you must leave me here alone! I was unhappy until you came into my life. I never knew what love and sympathy meant. I can't bear to think of trying to live without seeing you! Why must you go, Paul?"

He pressed her to his heart, without speaking. She noticed this; and there was a shade of annoyance in her voice, as she repeated:

"Why must you go?"

"Let's walk on to the spring," he answered; "I'll tell you as we go. I may not tell you all at present, dear; but I can't remain at my aunt's. Besides, I must go to build a nest for you. I've no home to take you to, now. As soon as I'm settled, I'll come

for you. Until that time you must remain here. Will you pray for my success, Marie?"

"Yes, Paul," she replied slowly, her eyes bent upon the ground; "but I do so hate to have you leave me. I've a premonition we shall never meet again. And what shall I do here? Of course Uncle Isaac is kind to me, in his rough way; but Aunt Nancy doesn't always like me, and sometimes she — she —"

"What?" asked Paul, quickly.

"Oh, she scolds, and says I'm lazy and trifling. And I don't like to be her drudge. Can't I go with you, Paul?"

They were standing by the spring; and she looked up at him pleadingly, all her soul in her tear-dimmed eyes.

"It may not be," he answered gently, laying his hand upon her shoulder. "But the parting shall not be for long. The months will soon slip by — and then how happy we shall be! Don't worry, sweetheart."

She smiled through her tears, and reached up her mouth for a kiss. She had perfect confidence in him now. He kissed her, and playfully putting her to one side began to fill the pail at the spring. A mischievous light flashed in her blue eyes, and catching up the gourd dipper she filled it with the sparkling water and slyly poured a stream down the back of his neck, as he bent to his task. Then, with a ripple of laughter, she bounded away along the path toward

the cabin. He took up the heavy pail and followed her, slopping the water over his shoes in his awkward efforts to overtake her. She nimbly danced and gyrated in front of him, until he was breathless and panting from his exertions. Then she suddenly returned to his side and taking one side of the pail assisted him with his burden, all the time calling him endearing names and glancing at him roguishly from the corners of her eyes.

Paul looked at her admiringly and laughed immoderately. In his estimation everything Marie did or said was perfectly right and proper.

Before they were half way to the house her whole deportment changed; again she was sad and dejected. But Paul cheered and comforted her, by telling her that he would not remain away long, and that this should be their only parting. At the cabin door he left her, and mounting his horse disappeared down the narrow trail. Marie watched him with tears in her eyes and a sickening dread in her fond young heart.

It was dark when Paul and Gumbo reached the plantation. The soft, warm light streaming from the small-paned windows seemed to beckon them as they drew near. Hester met her cousin at the door, and smilingly informed him that supper was ready and that she and her mother had been anxiously awaiting his coming. The two entered the sitting room, where Mrs. Lovelace greeted Paul cordially. He and Hester assisted the mother to the dining

room, and all sat down to their evening meal. Mrs. Lovelace asked Paul to recount the adventures of the day; and she and her daughter looked grave when he told of the fight with the bear, and laughed immoderately at his recital of Meeks' quaint remarks and Gumbo's unctuous absurdities.

The meal passed very pleasantly. At first Paul had a feeling of constraint; but as Hester appeared to have forgotten the morning's conversation, he was soon at ease. Supper over, the three returned to the sitting room and chatted merrily for an hour or more. Take it all in all, it was the most pleasant evening they had spent together in a long time; and the young man could but feel that it was a very comfortable home, and one that it would grieve him much to leave. After a time, Hester excused herself by saying that she wished to write a letter, and left the room. Feeling that his aunt would prefer to be left alone, Paul arose to go to his own apartments; but Mrs. Lovelace stopped him by saying:

"Sit down, my boy. Don't be in a hurry — you don't often spend an evening with me."

"Certainly, aunt, I shall stay, if you wish. I thought you were tired, perhaps, and would rather be left to yourself."

"I've been very lonely since the death of your dear uncle, Paul. You and Hester are my only companions — for, as you know, I'm not able to go to the home of my nearest neighbor. I miss each of

you very much, when you're out of the house. I've always regarded you as a son; you're as dear to me as my own daughter. I believe it would kill me to lose either Hester or you — you're all I have left to love."

Paul saw she was aware of his intended departure, and would oppose it. He braced himself for the ordeal. He did not look at her, yet he felt her eyes fixed upon him; and knew that she was studying his countenance, and that she expected him to say something.

"I've no doubt of your sincere love for me, Aunt Caroline," he replied. "You and Uncle George have always treated me as your own son; and I return your affection. I glean from what you've just said that Hester has told you of my intention of going away. Believe me, I'm loath to go, but there's no choice left me."

"Why?"

"I've nothing, and I've played the gentleman too long, already. I wish to earn my own living — to acquire wealth by my own effort."

"You say that you have nothing, Paul?"

"I said that — yes."

"Your uncle intended you should share equally with Hester; there's no call for your seeking your fortune elsewhere."

"Aunt Caroline," answered Paul, earnestly, "do you suppose for a moment that I would consent to rob Hester, whom I love as a dear sister; of what's

rightfully hers? Do you think me base enough to steal one-half her fortune, under the guise and name of brother? I cannot do it. As I told her this morning, you've been very good to me, a penniless orphan; but I can accept no more at your hands."

Mrs. Lovelace smiled serenely as she replied:

"My boy has false notions of his due and his duty. Hester and I offer you this because your uncle intended you should have it. It's yours, not ours. Of course we don't care to divide the estate; and there's no reason for so doing. Everything is yours and Hester's. Stay here and enjoy it with her."

As she said this, she watched him narrowly to note the effect of her words. Their eyes met; but he did not flinch. He understood her meaning fully, but he made no sign.

"I am very sorry, aunt, but I can't do as you wish."

"Why?" — And there was a chill in her voice.

"I've given you my reasons," he answered, quietly.

"I don't consider them valid. Tell me, Paul, what has given you such Quixotic notions?"

"I've been thinking of leaving, for weeks."

"You've not answered my question."

"There's no need of rethreshing the straw, Aunt Caroline. I don't know *how* to answer your question."

Mrs. Lovelace remained silent for a few moments,

steadily gazing into the embers upon the hearth. Paul moved uneasily in his chair. Turning upon him suddenly, she completely surprised him by asking:

"Paul, will you marry Hester, and share her fortune with her? It's the strong and earnest desire of my heart that you should. It was your uncle's wish. I haven't beaten about the bush. Will you do it?"

He had been aware all along that it was coming; but he had not expected her to put it so bluntly. For a moment he could say nothing. She had him at a disadvantage, and, he imagined, was enjoying his discomfiture. The thought helped him to call up his latent will power and to assert himself. He had been on the point of yielding to her desire, out of sheer helplessness. She had asked a direct question; he would give her a decisive answer. His reply was almost cruel in its terseness. Fixing his gaze upon her, he articulated the one word:

"No."

"You — will — not?" she gasped.

"I will not."

"Your reason?"

"I don't love Hester in that way."

It was painfully silent in the big room. Not a sound was to be heard, but the subdued breathing of the two persons and the slow tick-tock of the tall clock in the corner. A stick of wood tumbled from the andirons and fell blazing upon the hearth. In

the flickering light it shed, Paul saw his aunt's pale and emaciated countenance, and realized that the tide of her anger was rising. Presently he heard her saying — though her voice sounded unreal and far away:

"Bah! What do two children like you and Hester know of love! You've lived so long together that each has absorbed a part of the other. You're much alike in many things; but most alike in this — each loves the other without knowing it. And your love isn't wholly the love of brother and sister; *unconsciously* you're lovers. I'm not blind — *I* can see clearly. Let's have no more of this nonsense — this talk of the lack of love — this babble of seeking a fortune elsewhere. I'm sure that Hester loves you well enough to marry you and make you a good and true wife; and, as you love *no one else,* you surely love *her* — or can easily learn to do so —"

She hesitated momentarily, and he broke in:

"But I *do* love another, Aunt Caroline!"

"What!"

"I love Marie Fontanelle."

She laughed a low, forced laugh and returned sneeringly:

"Oh, yes! I know — a passing passion! The love a master may feel for a beautiful quadroon —"

"Aunt Caroline!" he interrupted — and his words fell like measured bits of ice; "if you speak thus of the woman I love, I'll not stay to hear you!"

"Do you mean to tell me that you are in earnest

— that you really fancy this — this miss of doubtful origin?"

"I love Marie — yes."

"And you intend to marry her?"

"I do."

The tide of her anger had been rising, little by little. Now it overleaped the bounds that she had set for it, and swept over her. It washed her from her moorings of self-restraint, and tossed her hither and thither. She sank into its boiling depths, with a gurgling moan; arose to the surface, buffeting the waves and raving half incoherently. Paul had never seen his aunt so aroused before, and looked upon her in wonder not unmixed with fear for her sanity.

"You dolt — you idot!" she cried shrilly. "You dare to insult my daughter by preferring an ignorant backwoods wench to her! For shame! And you call yourself a gentleman! Paul, if you marry this girl contrary to my wishes, you go out of my house a beggar. Do you understand? A penniless outcast! I won't own you — I'm glad you don't bear our name. You're mad to think of such a thing. What has come over you? I always gave you credit for better sense! In the name of reason, how can you contemplate such an act? Do you not see that it means ruin to yourself — to us all? I may as well tell you that Hester loves you fondly. And you would coolly and cruelly break her heart, for the sake of a milk-and-water face! What of the French girl's antecedents — of her relatives? Have

you given the matter a thought? I'll not believe you're in earnest — you can't be! Tell me that you're only jesting!"

Her mood had changed. Relieved from the torrent of anger, she regained her self-control. She uttered the last words brokenly and pleadingly — her frail body shaking as with an ague. Paul sat before her, unmoved through it all, apparently, until her voice faltered and the tears came to her eyes. Then he forgot the harsh things she had said, and sincerely pitied her.

"Aunt Caroline, what you ask can never be," he answered kindly but firmly. "Let's look the matter fairly in the face. I love Marie. I don't love Hester. I should be false to both, if I married the one I do not love. There! don't interrupt me — let me explain fully what I mean. I've a brother's love for my cousin — no more. It would be refined cruelty to marry her under the circumstances — to marry her for her money. No one on earth is so unhappy as a loving but unloved wife. Hester will soon forget me — that is, she will cease to regard me as a lover — and we shall all be happier for the decision I've made. I wish fate had willed it otherwise — I'm very sorry to disappoint and grieve those I love and respect. But it can't be."

Mrs. Lovelace sank back upon the sofa, exhausted. She wearily closed her eyes, and was silent for several minutes. At last she said in a weak but steady tone of voice:

"At least you don't think of leaving us at once, Paul?"

"I must go soon — very soon. It is better so."

"You'll stay, surely, until we can procure an efficient overseer?"

"I don't think I'm so necessary to the successful management of your plantation and affairs, Aunt Caroline. However, I'll stay for a few days, until you can make arrangements to your entire satisfaction."

Something akin to a smile trembled about her thin, straight lips, as she replied:

"Very well — that's all. You may go now; I'm tired."

She did not lift her eyelids nor move a muscle, as he bade her good-night and left the room. Shortly afterward, Hester came in to assist her mother to her room. Arriving there, the invalid dropped into a chair, sighing deeply. The daughter closed the door and asked:

"Well?"

"I found him unreasonable and obdurate."

Hester Lovelace drooped visibly. A hopeless expression rested upon her countenance.

"I'm not surprised; I knew that you could do nothing with him. My dream is over."

"Stop!" commanded Mrs. Lovelace, sternly. "Do you not love him?"

"With my whole soul!"

"Listen, then. He shall be yours! Do you hear

me? He shall be yours! I haven't played my last nor highest card. I — *we* will stop at nothing. Go to bed now — and may you sleep well."

Without another word, Hester assisted her mother to retire, and withdrew. Mrs. Lovelace fell asleep, a smile upon her worn face.

CHAPTER V

At breakfast next morning, Paul's appearance indicated that he had spent a restless night, and Hester's swollen eyelids showed that she had been weeping. But Mrs. Lovelace gave no sign of worriment or loss of sleep. She was dignified and collected, as usual, and did most of the talking, to the relief of the young people, who felt unequal to the task. The meal over, Paul went to superintend some work on a distant part of the estate, and mother and daughter were left alone. Mrs. Lovelace occupied her accustomed place on the rigid sofa in front of the fire, her emaciated fingers deftly wielding the knitting needles, while the ball of scarlet yarn in her lap turned over and over as she pulled upon the thread. Hester sat near, her work lying idle upon her knees and her dark eyes fastened upon vacancy.

"Hester!" The young woman started from her reverie.

"What is it, mother?"

"I told you last night that today we'd discuss methods of bringing Paul to his senses. I've formulated a plan."

Contrary to what Mrs. Lovelace expected, Hester

evinced little interest. The younger woman again turned toward the fire, and relaxed into listless indifference. The elder woman was surprised and puzzled.

"Hester, don't you want to marry Paul?" she cried.

"Certainly I do."

"Then what do you mean?"

"There's no use planning and scheming, mother; it's not to be," the daughter answered, sadly. "We may as well accept the inevitable."

"Nonsense!" said the other, angrily. "If you submit in this imbecile way, you are no daughter of mine. Nothing's impossible to those who work and wait. Listen! I tell you he *shall* be yours, if you'll do as I wish."

A perceptible change came over Hester. She showed more of animation in her voice and attitude, as she inquired:

"What shall I do?"

"Permit me to plan for you — and then execute what I plan."

"Well?"

"Marie Fontanelle must be removed from your path — from Paul's sight."

Startled and horrified, Hester exclaimed.

"Removed — how?"

"She must disappear, leaving no trace behind her."

"You mean to — to murder her?"

"Hardly so bad as that." — And Mrs. Lovelace laughed uneasily. "But suppose it becomes necessary to murder her, in order to accomplish our ends. What then? What's her *life* compared with your happiness? But it isn't necessary to go so far. I know a better and safer way."

The shocked look had not left Hester's face, as she said feelingly:

"Mother, I never saw you hard and cruel before. What does it mean?"

Fierce determination was in Caroline Lovelace's face, and settled resolve in her voice, as she replied:

"That I'm fully determined you and Paul shall marry, no matter who may oppose. And woe betide the one who stands in the road leading to the fulfillment of my desires! Are you ready to hear my plans?"

"I'm ready," answered Hester flushed and excited.

"It's this, then: we'll send Paul to Richmond, to negotiate the sale of the tobacco crop. While he's absent, we'll buy Isaac Meeks' little home and hire him to leave the country, taking the Fontanelle girl with him."

"Yes; but suppose Isaac refuses to sell?"

"He'll not — we'll offer him a price he can't afford to refuse."

"Miss Fontanelle may decline to go with her uncle."

"There are several reasons why she'll do nothing

of the kind. First, she has no home but with them; second, we can hire Isaac and his wife to take her by force, should she prove rebellious. They're not above bribery — and money will do anything."

"It hasn't bought me Paul's love!"

"It *has* not — but it *will!*"

"Oh, mother!" — And Hester clasped and unclasped her hands over her knees. "Do you believe we shall be able to accomplish all this?"

"Of course we shall! And when the girl's safely beyond Paul's sight, he'll turn to you for solace. Then will come your triumph and happiness. Cheer up now. This evening I shall ask your cousin to go to Richmond. If you chance to be present, don't take exceptions to anything I may say. Treat Paul as you've always treated him. Give him to understand you love him, and are sorry he thinks of leaving us. Men are peculiar — they must be coddled and coaxed, whipped and driven. Leave the matter in my hands; and you'll be happy."

A strange change was taking place in this mother and daughter. The stronger and more worthy mind was gradually but surely yielding to the baleful influence of the weaker and more unworthy. A week before, Hester would have shuddered and turned away from the base plot she now so calmly contemplated. By nature, Mrs. Lovelace was not a bad woman; but she would have sold her soul, if necessary, to accomplish the overmastering desire of her heart. Hester, urged forward by the goadings of un-

requited love, was blindly following whithersoever her mother led. Neither paused to ask what the end would be.

That evening the three sat together in the big, comfortable sitting room. The breath of frost outside gave warning that winter was on the way. Paul lounged in an easy chair, his booted heels stretched toward the crackling fire and his cheek upon his palm. Hester sat by him, her hand resting upon the arm of his chair, while Mrs. Lovelace occupied her place upon the sofa. They had been talking of neighborhood matters, but a constrained silence had fallen. Mrs. Lovelace was the first to break it.

"Where do you think of going when you leave us, Paul?"

The nephew drew himself together.

"I don't know — I haven't determined."

"You talk of leaving us within a few days, and yet you don't know where you're going?"

Mrs. Lovelace showed her surprise in her voice.

"I've thought of going to New York or Boston," Paul answered quietly.

"What would you do there?"

"I'm not certain — go into business, perhaps."

"And your money?"

"I have none — I realize that I should be compelled to start at the bottom of the ladder."

"You could sell your horse and servant."

Paul knew she was striving to make him feel how helpless he was, but he answered stoutly:

"I think too much of my horse to part with him; and, as for Gumbo, I will not sell him. When I leave I shall give him his freedom."

"The black would bring you a thousand dollars."

"You mean the horse, Aunt Caroline?"

"Nonsense! I mean Gumbo."

"No doubt; but I shall not sell him."

"Why?"

"It isn't necessary that I give you my reason, aunt; you know I don't believe in slavery. Beside, Gumbo has been a dear companion and friend to me all the years since my arrival in America. It would break my heart to sell the faithful fellow — I could never forgive myself."

Caroline Lovelace laughed a low, scornful laugh; and Hester's lip curled.

"You'll need a few dollars at least," his aunt continued, "when you start upon your tour of knight errantry. Gumbo can play Sancho Panza to your Don Quixote; but what of the coins to jingle in your purse?"

Paul kept his temper, under his aunt's merciless fire of ridicule.

"Oh! I have saved a few dollars. True, it's very little; but I trust it'll prove sufficient to pay my expenses until I can find the opportunity to earn more."

Mrs. Lovelace had grown weary of the round-about talk.

"Paul," she said, bluntly, "I want to give you a chance to earn some money. Will you go to Richmond, to negotiate the sale of the tobacco crop for us? I think we can do better by sending you there."

Paul was taken aback by her abruptness, but asked quickly:

"When do you wish me to go?"

"At once — within a day or two."

"It would take me several weeks to go and come."

"Yes."

"I'll go — but I'll accept nothing for my services."

"I'll attend to that. When can you be ready?"

"Tomorrow, if you wish."

Mrs. Lovelace could scarcely conceal her exultation, as she replied:

"You're kind, Paul; and I shall not forget it. I wish you could see your way clear — and — and give up your idea of going away; but you know your own business. You'd better retire early, if you think of starting in the morning."

When he had gone, the two women looked at each other in silence a moment.

"Do you think he suspects?" Hester whispered, moistening her dry lips with her tongue.

"I don't know — I don't care. Once he is out of the way, the game's ours. There's no retreating

now. Ah! the glorious result will be worth all the effort it costs."

Hester looked upon her mother and scarcely knew her. The older woman's face wore a flushed and triumphant expression, and her eyes had in them a feverish unrest. Her bosom rose and fell, and her lips — usually so pale — were red and hot. The invalid had disappeared for the time. Stimulated by the prospect of success, she was ready to do and dare anything.

"Mother," cried Hester in anxiety, "you are making yourself sick. Let's abandon the whole thing."

"Never!" was Mrs. Lovelace's decided answer.

"At any rate, you must go to bed now," insisted the daughter.

"I'll go to bed — yes; but not to sleep. I must know neither sleep nor rest until you are Paul Graydon's wife."

They passed through the door leading to their sleeping apartments; and the great sitting room was silent and deserted — peopled only by the dancing rays of the dying firelight, and silent save for the querulous clock in the shadow.

The next forenoon Paul and Gumbo set out for Richmond. Two hours later, a slave carrying a letter was on his way to the home of Isaac Meeks. Mrs. Lovelace did not believe in delay.

CHAPTER VI

A STORM was raging at the Meeks homestead; not a devastating tornado that fells forest trees and lays waste plantations, but an irritating whirlwind of fretful faultfinding — a tempest in the domestic teapot of the Meeks household. These storms were not infrequent. They came periodically, raged furiously, and died out suddenly. Each began as a freshening breeze, grew to a howling hurricane, and ended in a downpour of tears. It took but little to start one; the fall of a few degrees in the domestic barometer, the meeting of two countercurrents of connubial opinion — and the storm was on. They came always from one direction — from the quarter of the compass occupied by Mrs. Meeks.

Strange as it may seem, on these occasions Isaac Meeks sought refuge outdoors. Let the weather be what it might, he preferred the howling elements without to the howling spouse within.

He was well named — meekness personified — and was philosopher enough to know that the way to avoid a storm is to get out of its track. On this particular occasion, he had left the house as soon as he had discovered that the mercury had fallen one degree. Leaning against the sunny side of the stable,

he was drawing whiffs of consolation from his corn-cob pipe.

He had escaped none too soon. He could hear occasional outbursts, as he sat with his back against the log stable. Marie was the innocent cause of the falling barometer and consequent disturbance of the elements; and toward the hapless girl was directed the full force of Nancy Meeks' cyclone of rage and abuse. The niece had not returned from the spring as soon as her aunt had reason to expect.

"A purty gal, you are, Marie Fontanelle! You ain't worth y'r salt — not by half!" the irate female shouted at the top of her voice. "Send you to the spring an' tell you to hurry, an' you're gone a half day a'most. Me a waitin' here fer that water, an' you — you good-fer-nothin'— settin' down there on the bank, a dreamin' y'r foolish dreams o' love! Ain't you 'shamed o' y'rself — say?"

"Aunt Nancy —" Marie began soothingly; but that was as far as she got.

"Shut up — shut right up!" interrupted the older woman, shaking her hard and horny fist at the other. "Don't you dare to give me none o' y'r sass! All you're fit fer is to be a burden on somebody. Jest think of y'r mother, an' the trouble she brung on the fam'ly. I'd think it'd be a lesson to you! But no, here you are, startin' off the same way. You don't seem to 'preciate a good home. It's in you though — who could 'xpect anything else

of a Meeks, or anyone that has a drop o' the Meeks blood in the'r veins!"

She paused for breath. Marie sat staring through the window, and said nothing. This so enraged Mrs. Meeks, that she seemed in imminent danger of an apoplectic seizure. She literally gnashed her teeth.

"Why don't you answer me, you sullen, poutin' thing?" she foamed, stamping her foot and rolling the sleeves of her linsey-woolsey dress above her bony elbows.

Marie essayed to speak, but her aunt stopped her with:

"Don't say a word — not a single word! I won't have it — d' you hear? Set there an' pout if you want to! You're jest like y'r uncle — 'fraid to take y'r own part; just like all the Meekses! An' you're bound to git into trouble — that's what you are — jest like y'r mother did afore you! An' then what'll you do? You can't stay here, if anything happens to you. I won't be disgraced by you. I've talked and talked till my tongue's tired. You've had fair warnin' — but you won't listen to nothin'!"

Marie covered her face with her hands and wept silently, not because her aunt had scolded her —she was used to that — but because Mrs. Meeks had spoken disrespectfully of Paul and of her dear dead mother. A rapid change came over the angry woman, as she looked upon the weeping girl. Her storm of passion subsided as suddenly as it had arisen.

Her features began to twitch, and her angular frame shook with suppressed sobs. Two bright tears escaped from the corners of her eyes and rolled down her furrowed cheeks — and then she gave up the struggle and cried blubberingly. By some mysterious process of reasoning, she persuaded herself that she was the injured party.

"That's just the way with you, Marie!" she wailed, wringing her hands and pacing up and down the floor. "I can't say a word to you — not one word — that you don't let on that I've hurt y'r feelin's. An' you know I didn't mean to do anything o' the kind. I've got a bad temper — I know I have — but I'm put upon from mornin' to night, from one year's end to another. Then if I say a word, y'r Uncle Isaac runs out o' the house an' you break down an' bawl. I know I oughtn't to scold you an' say mean things about you — you're a good gal — but I didn't mean it. Marie — you know I didn't! I jest can't bear to see you fooled by that 'ristocratic upstart — that's all. Fergit that I ever said anything 'bout y'r mother, gal; she was a nice woman — but she got fooled into marryin' a Frenchman; an' I don't want to stand by and see you made a fool of fer life. I jest can't—I can't!"

She strode over to Marie, and flinging her muscular arms around the girl's neck, tenderly kissed her brow and golden hair, murmuring:

"You're my oldest gal — I can't never look on you in no other way; an' I'm all the mother you've

got. I'm sorry I scolded you an' made you cry — but I don't scold you any more'n I do the others, do I? Tell me that you'll fergive an' fergit all I've said an' done!"

Marie kissed the careworn face of her aunt, and assured her she freely and fully forgave her. She knew that the poor woman's lot was a grinding one, and that her contrition was genuine. The storm was past, and the sun was shining from a cloudless sky.

A moment later the door opened a few inches, and Mr. Meeks timidly thrust his head into the room. Marie was removing the fragrant corn-pone from the Dutch-oven upon the hearth; and her Aunt Nancy was placing the pewter plates upon the rough deal table. Emboldened by what he saw, the redoubtable Isaac — who had the courage to attack a mountain lion single-handed, but who had a wholesome fear of his wife's displeasure — pushed first one foot and then its fellow through the aperture he had made, and stood within the room. Mrs. Meeks, turning suddenly, caught sight of her husband standing near the door, irresolution depicted upon his countenance.

"Set down, Isaac," she remarked, pleasantly; "dinner'll be ready in a few minutes."

The words had a reassuring effect upon the hunter, but he did not sit down. Instead, he uneasily shifted from one foot to the other as he essayed to catch his wife's eye, all the while fumbling and turning a white object he held in his hands. Failing to

attract her attention, he cleared his throat and faltered:

"Nancy, I — that is, would you jest step out here a minute? I want to speak to you."

Mrs. Meeks was surprised. He was not in the habit of consulting her in regard to his affairs.

"Well, what d' you want? Out with it — an' don't stand there gawkin' like a luny!" Her nerves were still on edge, and his indirect methods of procedure irritated her.

"Step out here; I want to see you a little bit," he managed to say.

"Can't you see me here?"

"No; I want to see you alone."

"Well, of all things!" she ejaculated, rolling down her sleeves and starting toward the door. "What in the nation ails the man!"

Mr. Meeks led the way and she followed him. Stepping out upon the log steps, she closed the heavy door after her and awaited his pleasure.

"Nancy," he began impressively and in a semi-whisper, "here's a letter; an' the nigger that fetched it says —"

"What nigger?" she interrupted sharply, glancing around the corner of the house.

"That'n out there on the horse," he answered jerking his thumb over his shoulder, toward the stable.

She looked in the direction indicated and saw a negro seated upon a gray horse, just beyond the

woodpile. The horse was champing the bit and pawing the soft earth impatiently, but the rider sat with half-closed eyes, as motionless as a figure of polished ebony.

"Who is he?" Nancy inquired in a low, cautious tone.

"One o' the Lovelace slaves," came the reply in the same guarded undertone.

"You say he brung a letter?"

"Yes."

"Who from?"

"Mrs. Lovelace; an' he says we ain't to let anybody see it?"

"Have you read it?"

"I tried to, but I can't spell it all out."

He handed it to her, and watched her eagerly as she struggled through the labyrinth of unfamiliar characters. She spelled it out word by word, halting and stammering painfully. The letter ran as follows:

"Mr. Isaac Meeks and Wife:

"I desire that you come to see me at once. I wish to confer with you in regard to a matter that is occasioning me a great deal of annoyance and anxiety. I can assure you that you are equally interested with myself. It means money in your pockets to come. Come today — and let no one see this communication or know your destination. It will be necessary that you stay over night with me; arrange your household affairs accordingly. A conveyance

is in waiting at the Rock Spring. Hoping to have the pleasure of seeing you this evening, I am your most obedient servant,

"CAROLINE LOVELACE."

Nancy Meeks could not decipher the whole of the missive, nor fathom the meaning of it to her entire satisfaction; but she gleaned from it that the writer wished to see her husband and herself upon important business, at once. Also, in a vague sort of way, she realized that it was necessary to observe great secrecy — and best of all, the letter mentioned money! She was trembling with excitement, and the paper shook in her knotty hands. She spelled it through again, to make sure that she had read aright. Yes, there was no mistake! It said "money in your pockets." Money! Was the dream of her sordid life to be realized at last? She clutched the bit of white paper spasmodically, as though she already had a pile of glittering yellow coins within her grasp. Isaac's patience gave way, and he broke in upon her blissful reverie by asking:

"What do you make out of it?"

"It's a letter from Caroline Lovelace — the rich woman in the valley," she answered, setting her arms akimbo and looking her husband full in the face.

"Yes, I know; but what does she want?"

"Wants us to come an' see her on business."

"Are you sure?"

"Yes."

"Maybe you're right — I couldn't jest make it out. What's up, do you s'pose?"

"I don't know; but I s'pect it's somethin' 'bout that there nephew o' hers, an' our Marie."

Mr. Meeks looked puzzled, and meditatively scratched his head. He could not understand what he or his wife had to do with Paul Graydon's affairs. If Paul wanted to marry Marie, he, Isaac, had not the slightest objection. It was a mistake for people to marry at all — he admitted that — but then they *would* do it! Paul and Marie had a perfect right to make fools of themselves, if they so desired! Isaac failed to comprehend what his wife meant, and so expressed himself.

"It don't make no differ'nce whether you understand 'r not," was the decided answer of Nancy; "we're goin' down to see Mrs. Lovelace this very day. Tell the nigger we'll be along in an hour 'r so — ther's a carriage waitin' fer us at the Rock Spring. Be spry, now; we must hurry up an' git ready."

Mr. Meeks went to deliver his wife's message to the waiting slave, while she entered the cabin and began hurried preparations for their departure. She arrayed herself in her best hood and linsey-woolsey gown, carefully brushed and smoothed her coarse iron-gray hair, greased her heavy shoes with bear's grease — and announced herself as ready. The easy-going Isaac would have dispensed with ablution and toilet, had not the good wife taken him in hand. She

scrubbed his wrinkled face and neck, combed his sparse hair and straggling beard, and compelled him to don a clean hunting shirt. Then she stood back and looked upon her handiwork, admiringly.

The two children, Johnnie and Annie, viewed these preparations in open-eyed wonder; and snuffled and pouted when they were informed that they could not accompany their parents. Marie evinced unbounded surprise and not a little consternation, when told that her uncle and aunt would be away over night.

She racked her brain for an explanation of their strange behavior, but could come to no satisfactory conclusion, and contented herself with helping her aunt to get ready for the journey.

Hester Lovelace met the mountaineer and his wife at the gate; and Mrs. Lovelace greeted them cordially — not to say effusively. When husband and spouse found themselves in the big mansion — furnished in such grandeur and splendor as the two never had known — they were somewhat abashed; but their hostess and her daughter exerted themselves to put them at their ease, and succeeded so well that Isaac and Nancy soon felt perfectly at home. After a time Nancy grew tired of admiring the many things about her, of asking innumerable questions in regard to each, and of ejaculating her wonderment at the answers she received. She fidgeted in her chair, and, at last, broached the object of her visit, by saying:

"Me an' Isaac here got a letter from you, Mrs. Lovelace, askin' us to come down an' see you on some business; an' as far's I'm c'ncerned, I'm ready to talk it over right at once."

The mistress of the mansion smiled amiably and replied:

"There's no hurry. Supper will be ready soon; after that's over we can talk at our leisure — we have the whole night before us."

The practical Nancy was impatient to know something definite of the business in hand — especially of the money Mrs. Lovelace had mentioned. However, she grimly bided her time.

CHAPTER VII

"I SENT for you"— Mrs. Lovelace was speaking —"because I wished to talk over with you, something in which we're all interested; yet I hardly know how to begin."

She waited for a word of encouragement; but neither Isaac nor Nancy felt called upon to speak. The former sat gazing into the red embers at his feet, a vacant, far-away look upon his face. One hand fumbled in the bosom of his hunting shirt and the other plucked nervously at his straggling beard. A strange, lost feeling held possession of him. He hardly knew what it meant — yes, he did! He wanted to smoke. He had not had recourse to his one source of comfort and consolation — his corncob pipe — since the middle of the afternoon. The more he pondered the more importunate and irresistible became his desire. Mrs. Lovelace noticed his growing uneasiness and shrewdly guessed the cause. The smell of tobacco was distasteful to her; but she did not intend to let anything stand in the way of her using these people to further the end she had in view, so she said:

"Light your pipe, Mr. Meeks, and smoke while I talk. I was just going to say — "

"Hold on a minute!" interrupted Nancy.

And diving into the profound depths of the pocket of her gown, she fished up a short-stemmed pipe and a quantity of loose tobacco. Isaac procured like articles from the cavernous interior of his hunting shirt, filled the bowl of his pipe, dexterously dipped a glowing coal from the ashes upon the hearth, pressed it into place with the ball of his horny thumb, and settled back in his chair, perfect content pictured upon his bland countenance. Nancy went through a series of similar maneuvers, stuck the short stem into the corner of her mouth, and leaning forward, with her elbows upon her knees, puffed vigorously for a few seconds. Then she removed the pipe from her lips, spat upon the hearth, and ejaculated:

"Now I'm all ready; go on with what you was goin' to say."

Hester, sitting back in the shadow, curled her thin lips in silent contempt, and waited impatiently for her mother to begin. The latter smothered a cough occasioned by the pungent smoke of the partly cured tobacco and resumed:

"As you've guessed, perhaps, I wish to talk of my nephew and your niece."

She paused a moment, to watch the effect of her words; but, noting no change in the impassive countenances of her guests, she continued: "It has come to my knowledge within the last few days, that Paul's paying attention to the young woman who lives with you; and it pains and mortifies me to say

that he — my own nephew — has no honorable motive in so doing. Like many another young man, he's thinking only of his own amusement. It affords me no pleasure to say this of my nephew, whom I love, but it is the solemn truth."

Again Mrs. Lovelace hesitated. She wanted to be sure of her ground before venturing too far. Nancy Meeks did not change her position. Isaac, on the other hand, was visibly affected. He stirred uneasily in his chair and nervously tapped the hearth with the toe of his heavy boot. Mrs. Lovelace, keenly scrutinizing the two, saw Mr. Meeks' growing restlessness, and, fearing he would offer opposition if she did not handle him very carefully, said:

"Perhaps you know more of this unfortunate affair than I, Mr. Meeks. If you do, will you not enlighten me?"

Isaac crossed one nether limb over the knee of the other, and reflectively caressed his boot-leg, as he replied:

"I ain't certain I know much 'bout the matter, one way r' t'other; an' I don't see as it makes much diff'rence, either. Course marriages 're unfortunate, more 'r less, take 'em as they come; but I don't know as *this* one 'ld be any more unfortunate than any *other* one. If Mr. Paul an' our Marie wants to git married, I don't know no reason why me 'r Nancy ought to object — *we* got married when we got ready, an' didn't ask nobody. Our marriage was a partic'lar unfortunate one —"

The wife of his bosom straightened her tall form and, fixing upon him a look of unutterable scorn, cried:

"Isaac Meeks, not another word! You're a 'tarnal fool fer the want 'o good sense — that's what *you* are!"

The husband promptly relapsed into silence and devoted his undivided attention to his pipe, which had gone out while he was talking. Mrs. Meeks resumed her former position, knocked the ashes from the heated bowl that she held in her fingers, by tapping it upon the hearthstone, and, with her square jaws firmly set, stared hard at the glowing fire, as though it were the guilty offender. Hester turned her face to hide the smile she could not suppress; while her mother bit her lips in vexation. An embarrassing silence ensued, to relieve which Mrs. Lovelace tentatively inquired:

"Mr. Meeks, you don't believe my nephew intends to marry your niece, do you?"

Isaac nodded his head vigorously as he replied: "Of course I believe he's goin' to marry 'er; else why'd he be *courtin'* 'er? That's what I want to know. He comes to see 'er purty reg'lar, an' all on his own hook — nobody *makes* him come. I ain't no doubt him an' Marie likes each other — not a mite o' doubt; an' if they want to git married, *let* 'em git married. What makes you think he hain't no notion of marryin' Marie?"

Mrs. Lovelace was not displeased at the answer she had received.

"Mr. Meeks," she replied, "I wish to answer your question — and to answer it fully. To do so I must talk plainly; and I trust that in so doing I shall not offend you. Paul will never marry your niece, for several reasons. In the first place, he is poor, and must marry for money. He can't afford to do otherwise. In the second place, he doesn't love Miss Fontanelle — he is deceiving her. Besides, young men who are descendants of the best English families aren't in the habit of marrying so far beneath them."

Mrs. Lovelace paused abruptly, for Nancy's eyes, in which a dangerous fire flashed, were turned full upon her.

"She's jest as good as *he* is — an' better!" the latter hissed between her teeth. Mrs. Lovelace raised her thin white hand in protestation, but the angry woman went on:

"An' if you think you can set there an' belittle 'er, an' me not say a word, you're badly mistaken — that's all! I won't listen to it! I'll walk every step o' the way home tonight, before I'll hear my gal run down by you 'r anybody else — so there!"

The English woman was perfectly cool as she replied: "There, there, my good woman! I didn't mean to speak disparagingly of your niece — not at all. You misunderstood me. I agree with you that Miss Fontanelle is *far* better than my nephew;

for in many respects he's not what he should be. And it was to warn you against him and his vicious propensities, that I called you here. To make you understand clearly that he will not marry your niece — *cannot* marry her, if he would — I've but to tell you that he's already betrothed to another, whom he'll wed in the near future."

"An' he's goin' to marry your daughter?"

"Mrs. Meeks, it matters little whom he's to wed, so long as he can't wed your niece. My husband and I have reared and educated Paul; and I look upon him as a son. I do not want him to bring disgrace and sorrow to me and mine; nor do I want him to work ruin to you and yours. This attachment between him and Miss Fontanelle must be sundered. They must be separated, to meet no more."

"I ain't goin' to take no part a-separatin' 'em," said Isaac, obstinately shaking his head.

"Do shut up, Isaac!" Mrs. Meeks interjected. "You don't know nothin' 'bout this thing. Hain't I told you all along that Mr. Paul never meant to marry Marie? An' now you see I was right. You thought I was hard on the gal, 'cause I scolded 'er an' told 'er not to make a dunce of 'erself, 'bout a man that didn't keer a straw fer 'er; but *now* you'll shut y'r mouth, I reckon. I was doin' 'er a motherly kindness all the time — but I got blamed fer it, jest as I do fer everything. I hope *now* you'll shut y'r mouth an' have some sense."

Then turning to Mrs. Lovelace, Nancy continued:

"What d' you mean by separatin' 'em? Do you think o' sendin' y'r nephew out o' the neighborhood?"

Mrs. Lovelace smothered her rising ire at the impudent question, and quietly replied:

"Willingly would I send Paul away, if I could; but that's impossible. He's a hot-blooded young man, and will go his own gait. Unless Miss Fontanelle is removed from his sight and reach, he'll bring disgrace and sorrow upon us all."

Isaac grasped the arms of his chair and planted his feet squarely upon the floor — but said nothing. Nancy's face flushed, and she cried hotly:

"A purty neighbor you are, Mrs. Lovelace! Askin' us to drive our gal away from all the home she's got, jest to 'commodate you an' yours. We shan't do nothin' o' the kind!"

The English woman smiled more sweetly than ever, as she answered suavely:

"You persist in misconstruing my language, my good woman. I've said that I'd send my nephew away, if I could. That's out of the question — I've no influence over his actions. But for the good of all, these two must be parted. I don't ask that you drive your niece from home, but that you leave this section, taking her with you. Wait! I'm not through. If you'll leave the state at once — within a few days — letting no one know your

destination, and pledging yourselves never to return, I'll buy your land and pay you well for going. You have everything to gain and nothing to lose, by doing what I suggest. With the money I'll pay you, you can buy a larger farm and can live much better than you do here. Beside, you'll be saving yourselves no end of trouble and will be doing your niece a kindness — though she may not see it in that light. What have you to say to my proposition?"

Isaac looked anxiously at his wife. He knew from bitter experience that she would have her way in this case, as in all others. The fondest desire of his honest heart was to live in peace with all mankind. His cabin on the mountain side had been his peaceful home for years — and to the simple-minded man there was no spot on earth like it.

But Nancy! She was energetic and ambitious; for years she had been teasing him to seek another location. He sighed deeply at the thought, as he watched his wife's face light up with eager excitement. The sigh attracted Nancy's attention, and she turned upon him angrily:

"Isaac Meeks, ain't you 'shamed o' y'rself? Jest see the man settin' there a-sighin' 's if he was at his own funer'l; an' all 'cause he's 'fraid he'll have to leave that blessed purty cabin up there in the woods! I've been teasin', an' coaxin', an' tormentin', all these years, to git out o' here, an' try an' make a decent livin'; an' now when the chance

comes 'round an' knocks at our door, he's scared to death fer fear he'll have to git up an' dust fer a better place. Isaac — you lazy, good-fer-nothin'! I don't want to hear a word out o' you — not a word!"

Then, wheeling her chair toward Mrs. Lovelace and bending forward until she peered into the latter's face, Mrs. Meeks eagerly inquired:

"Was you in earnest when you said you'd buy us out an' pay us fer leavin' the state an' never comin' back?"

Mrs. Lovelace could scarcely conceal her exultation. She had touched the right spring — Nancy's cupidity — while groping blindly in the dark; and the door of her desires stood open before her. Her temples beat and her head swam from the sense of relief that came over her.

"Yes," she said with an effort. "I'll buy your land at a fair price and pay you for leaving the state and taking your niece with you. But you must sign a written agreement that you'll never return to this locality; that you'll let no one know your destination; that you'll do all in your power to prevent the girl from coming back; and that you'll not permit her to communicate with my nephew, in any way."

"How much'll you give us fer the land?"

Mrs. Lovelace named a fair price.

"Tain't enough!" Isaac broke in. "An' I don't want to sell, nohow —"

"Shut y'r mouth, Isaac Meeks!" Nancy thundered. "I'm a-makin' this bargain. You've had the say all along; an' we've never prospered. Now *I'm* a-goin' to take things in hand. An' how much'll you give us fer leavin' the state an' takin' our gal with us, Mrs. Lovelace?"

"Fifty pounds in English gold," the latter answered, after a moment's thought.

"Fifty pounds in gold? Mrs. Lovelace, me an' Isaac accepts y'r offer — don't we, Isaac?"

"I s'pose we do, if you say so!" he answered in a low tone.

"When can we 'ave the papers drawed up?" Nancy continued, again addressing Mrs. Lovelace.

"Tomorrow."

"When'll this money be paid over to me?"

"The money for the land will be given to you when the deed's drawn and signed."

"An' the other?"

"I'll give you that when you drive by my house, on your way out of the state."

"Then it's a bargain; an' I'll jest smoke another pipe on it, 'fore I go to bed."

CHAPTER VIII

At nine o'clock the next morning, the papers were drawn, signed and witnessed; and the agreement was closed. Isaac and Nancy — the former depressed, the latter elated — wended their way homeward, arriving a little after noon. Nancy wasted no time in tersely informing her niece of the proposed change of residence.

"What do you mean, Aunt Nancy?" Marie cried in great surprise.

"Mean jest what I say. We're goin' to move to another place, where we can do better'n we've ever done here."

"Where are you going?"

"Don't say '*you,*' say '*we,*'" snapped Nancy; "fer we're *all* a-goin'. I don't know jest where yit, but over into Pennsylvany, I s'pect."

"How soon 're you going to start, Aunt?"

"Ther' you go ag'in!" pettishly whined Mrs. Meeks. "A body 'ld think from y'r talk you had a fortune o' y'r own, and didn't 'ave to live with me an' y'r uncle. I reckon you'll go along with us, Miss Independence?"

Marie dropped her eyes, as she stammered: "I — don't know. I —"

"Well, of all things!" interrupted Nancy, with a snort of anger. "Jest listen at the silly gal! If you don't go with us, what in the world *will* you do? Where'll you stay? You can't live here all by y'rself — an' the cabin's sold, anyhow. *'Course* you'll go along with us — you can't do nothin' else."

"Perhaps I could obtain employment with some family in the valley," Marie suggested.

"P'rhaps you could, an' p'rhaps you couldn't!" sneered her aunt. "But you ain't a-going' to — so there! I know what you want. You want to stay 'round here, thinkin' that Paul Graydon 'll come back and marry you. He'll never do nothin' o' the kind. He's engaged to a rich woman — a woman of his own station in life. I've found out somethin' 'bout that young man. Jest as I've alluz told you, he don't care nothin' fer you. There! Cry like a baby!" — Marie was not crying, but unshed tears were standing in her eyes.

"But when are — are — we going?" faltered the niece.

"Jest as soon as we can git ready — in a week 'r such a matter at the most."

"Why are you in such haste, Aunt Nancy?"

Mrs. Meeks was considerably mollified as she replied:

"Got to move right away, child, 'fore the roads breaks up. Winter'll soon be here."

"Couldn't you wait a few weeks?"

"By no means, gal! What ails you?"

Marie threw her plump arms around her aunt, and, looking up into the rugged face that bent above her, pleaded: "Oh, let me stay here, Aunt Nancy — anywhere! Please —please do not take me away for a few weeks! Paul has promised to come back to me in that length of time."

Mrs. Meeks' face softened perceptibly, as she gazed upon the pleading girl; but her voice was firm.

"It won't do! I pity you, Marie, but I can't listen to no talk like that. Did he say he'd come back to you in two 'r three weeks?"

Marie hesitated. "No, not exactly that; but he promised to come for me as soon as he could make a home for us. Oh, he'll come, aunt, I know he will! Do let me stay here — I can find employment! And what 'll he think, if I run away and leave him!"

Pleadings and arguments proving unavailing, the subject was dropped; and the various members of the family began to prepare for their departure. Isaac sighed lugubriously as he shuffled about his work, and surreptitiously wiped away the truant tears that escaped from the inner corners of his watery eyes and dangled from the end of his prominent nose. Nancy was in the best of spirits; and the two children were jubilant over the prospect of a change of scene. Poor Marie was heartbroken over the thought of leaving the neighbor-

hood, without Paul's knowledge. What would he think when he returned and found her gone? What should she do? She turned the matter over and over in her mind, as she assisted her aunt in packing the few household effects. Should she run away and hide at some farmer's house in the valley, until her relatives had left the vicinity? It would not do; she knew that she should be captured and brought back in disgrace. At last an idea came that caused her to smile through her tears. She would write a letter for Paul and leave it with his relatives, asking them to send it to him when they learned his address. Then, when she reached her destination, she would write him another apprising him of her whereabouts. This one, also, she would send to his aunt, to be given him upon his return. Of course Aunt Nancy would object if she knew, but she need not know. With this resolve, she felt better and performed her duties quite cheerfully. To what bitter disappointment she was doomed!

Mrs. Meeks put forth every effort to hasten the preparations for their journey, and to such good purpose that on the third day after the signing of the articles of agreement, the entire outfit was ready to start.

When the Lovelace homestead was reached, Mr. and Mrs. Meeks entered the house to receive the money. Hester strolled out to the wagon and gra-

ciously accosted Marie, who was holding the lines and looking after the restless children.

"I don't know where we shall make our home," said the latter in reply to Hester's question. "Miss Lovelace, will you do me a great favor?"

"If it be within my power — yes."

"Will you send this letter to your cousin, Paul Graydon, when you learn his address?"

Hester took the letter from Marie's hand and murmured an inaudible reply. Her face was scarlet as she bade the other a hasty farewell and turned toward the house. Isaac and Nancy came out and climbed into their places; the wagon moved forward; and the occupants soon lost sight of the gray mansion by the roadside.

* * * * * * * * *

Three weeks after the emigration of the Meeks family, Paul and Gumbo returned from Richmond. The young man was dust-covered, travel-stained and weary. He kissed Hester's upturned face, as she greeted him; and reported the sale of the crop at a good price, to his aunt.

"Nothing unusual has occurred in the neighborhood?" Paul asked carelessly.

"I'm told your hunter friend, Isaac Meeks, has left for parts unknown," said Mrs. Lovelace.

Paul started and stared hard at his relative, as he asked: "What do you mean?"

"What I say," she answered, quietly; "He has left this part of the country."

"When?"

"Almost three weeks ago, I think."

"Did — did he take his family with him?"

"Yes."

"And Marie?"

"Yes, all of them went. They passed here on their journey."

His lips were white and his face was twitching as he inquired: "Where have they gone?"

"I don't know — and I don't care," came the cold and pitiless reply. "They were poor and shiftless, and no credit to the community. For your sake, Paul, I'm glad that they are gone."

"Aunt Caroline, let us say no more on the subject," said Paul, a hopeless, haggard look overspreading his features. "We can't agree, and it's better that we never mention it again. I'm worn out — I'm going to my room to rest."

"Don't you want your supper — aren't you hungry?" Hester queried anxiously.

"I'm too tired to eat," he replied.

He went straight to bed; but, tired as he was, he could not sleep. He tossed about in feverish unrest, and asked himself a thousand questions to not one of which he could give a satisfactory answer. Marie had been taken away from him! He buried his face in the pillows and groaned in agony of spirit. Why had the Meeks family left their old home so suddenly? Why had they gone at all? Where had they gone? And Isaac had pretended to be his friend!

What could it all mean? Had they forced Marie to accompany them, or had she gone of her own free will?

Like an endless chain, each link of which was red with fire, these questions dragged through his mind, until he felt that he could bear the torture no longer.

He descended to the sitting room next morning, looking haggard and exhausted. Hester noted his changed appearance; and her eyes filled with tears. She loved him dearly in her fierce, passionate way; and she almost wished she had not been instrumental in bringing upon him such great sorrow. He said but little, ate a light breakfast, and mounting his horse rode away in the direction of the Meeks cabin.

We shall not follow him on his visit to the deserted nest. It is sufficient to say that he returned at nightfall, having ascertained nothing of the destination of Marie and her relatives or of the cause of their sudden departure. The next morning he set out upon the trail of the emigrants. For the first twenty or thirty miles, he had no trouble in following them, by making inquiries of residents along the way. Then his task became more difficult. The information he received grew vague and uncertain; and, at last, he could glean no word of the fugitives. He gave up in despair and retraced his way homeward, almost wild with grief and disappointment.

The autumn passed, and winter came. Paul Graydon scarcely noted the change. He grew thin and nervous, and a fixed melancholy took possession of

him. Hester was kind and attentive, but not obtrusively so; and she and Paul again became close companions. At this, Aunt Caroline nodded knowingly and smiled complacently to herself. Once only was Marie's name mentioned.

"She's as one dead — let's speak kindly of the dead," Paul answered bitterly.

Early spring arrived; but Paul had made no proposal to Hester. One day Aunt Caroline said to him:

"When are you and Hester to be married?"

"Aunt Caroline, I can't marry Hester. I have a firm conviction that Marie wasn't false — that she was compelled to leave without communicating with me. I can't marry my cousin — and I'm going away at once."

"Where?"

"To the new settlement the New Englanders have founded in the Northwest Territory."

"You said once you had no desire to get farther away from the center of civilization."

"I've changed my mind. No place can be too wild to suit my present mood."

He gave Gumbo his freedom, packed his few earthly possessions, bade his relatives a tearful farewell, mounted his horse, and set his face toward the wilderness. As he rode from the door, Hester, pale as marble, was in the big sitting room, kneeling by her mother's side and chafing the invalid's thin hands; for Mrs. Lovelace had fainted.

When two miles from the mansion, Paul hesitated, reined in his horse and looked back. He saw a man dogging his horse's footprints; and he waited for the fellow to come up. It was Gumbo.

"Where are you going?" Paul inquired.

"Wid you, Marse Paul," replied the negro, looking beseechingly at his master.

"You cannot, you must not!" Paul cried, sternly. "Go back to Aunt Caroline — go, I command you!"

Gumbo made no move to obey the mandate.

"I's gwine wid you, Marse Paul — I ain't a-gwine back."

"Do you refuse to obey me?" Paul shouted.

"Yes, I does in dat."

"Then I'll compel you to go."

"You fo'gets, Marse Paul, dat I's a free man an' can go whar I pleases."

"True!" — And the young man burst into a laugh.— "Well, what do you mean to do?"

"Go wid you."

"Afoot?"

"Yes, Marse Paul."

"Very well — have your will. As long as I've a crust you shall share it."

Paul was not displeased. As he resumed his journey, Gumbo — faithful fellow that he was — trudged sturdily at the horse's heels.

CHAPTER IX

At the close of a rainy April day, in the year seventeen hundred and ninety, two men stood upon the bank of a swollen stream that emptied its turbulent flood into the Ohio river, a few miles above the newly-founded settlement of Marietta. The younger of the two held by the rein a jaded and mud-bespattered black horse, and gazed in perplexity upon the angry, tumbling waters that interposed a liquid barrier between himself and companion and the settlement he desired to reach ere nightfall. The garments of the two were rain-drenched and muddy, and the unfortunate travelers presented a pitiable spectacle, as they stood shivering in the fast-gathering twilight. The rain had ceased to fall, the skies had partly cleared, and the wind that swept up the valley was biting and chill.

"What do you say, Gumbo, dare we attempt to ford it?"

"I doesn't know, Marse Paul — I doesn't know," replied the negro, reflectively. "It looks mighty juberous to me, it does."

"Night's coming on, and we must cross this stream at some point," said Paul. "To seek a ford farther up its course involves toil that I don't feel

Paul turned the beast's head a little up stream, and encouraged him by word and caress

able to undertake. Besides, we run the risk of losing ourselves in the unbroken forest. The settlement cannot be many miles away; and we must reach it to-night. We've had no food since morning, and we're weak and hungry. To camp out another night means to go without anything to eat for another twelve hours at least. That will not do. Let us mount the horse and make the attempt to ford."

"Does you apprehen' dat Prince can carry us bofe across dar, Marse Paul?"

"I don't know — we must make the trial."

Paul seated himself firmly in the saddle, and Gumbo sprang up behind. The former gathered up the reins and urged the black steed into the raging current. For the first few yards, the ford was shallow. As they proceeded, the water rose higher and higher on the horse's sides and the current grew swifter, until the noble animal could hardly keep his footing. Paul turned the beast's head a little up stream, and encouraged him by word and caress. The young man's handsome face was white, and his square jaws were hard set; while the negro's features were ashen. Both realized the danger that threatened them. The din of the surging waters rang in their ears, and the shifting panorama of yellow made their brains reel. Another step — and Prince was beyond his depth! With a cry that was almost human, he sank into the boiling depths and was swept swiftly down the stream with his heavy burden. Paul leaned well forward, directing Gumbo to do the same, and at-

tempted to head the animal for the opposite shore. It was all in vain! Prince's load was too heavy, and his strokes grew feebler and he sank lower and lower. Then it was that Gumbo showed he had in him that which is worthy of everlasting life.

"Goodby, Marse Paul!" he shouted in the latter's ear. Loosing his hold, he slid from the horse's back and disappeared down the stream.

Freed from a part of his burden, Prince with great difficulty made his way to the shore from which he had started, landing a hundred yards below the place where he had entered the creek. He scrambled up the steep and slippery bank, and stood snorting and trembling from fear and exertion. His master slid to the ground and, throwing himself upon his face, moaned and shivered.

Paul Graydon was faint and exhausted. For several minutes, he hardly knew what had occurred or where he was. Then a full realization of it all swept through his mind, like a whirlwind of flame. He staggered to his feet crying — "Gumbo! Gumbo!" But the mocking roar of rushing waters was the only reply. With cold and trembling fingers, he clutched Prince's mane and drew himself into the saddle. He did not stop to reason upon what he purposed to do. Gumbo was gone, and he must find him. He turned the horse's head toward the stream and again essayed to enter the treacherous current. For the first time in Paul's experience, Prince refused to do his bidding. The master dashed his

spurred heel into the dumb creature's flank and frantically shook the rein, but Prince did not budge from his tracks.

"Does the white man wish to join his fathers in the spirit-land?"

Paul dropped the rein and glanced hurriedly around. The voice was still ringing in his ears — but whence did it come? Was it the warning of Omnipotence, or a creation of his own excited imagination. The shades of evening were gathering. The young man peered into their depths of gloom, but saw no one. A superstitious dread stole over him, and he shuddered.

"Bah!" he muttered, as he shook himself and again took up the reins, "I'm as nervous as a flighty old woman."

Once more he urged the horse forward.

"Does the paleface seek death?"

Paul almost leaped from the saddle, for the voice was at his elbow. He stared into the face that was upturned to his own, and asked sharply:

"Who and what are you?"

"Silverheels, the Shawnee," came the reply in deep, gutteral tones that were not unmusical.

"An Indian?"

"Ugh!"

"Where did you come from?" Paul inquired.

The Indian stepped back a pace and, raising a sinewy arm, pointed into the depths of the wood,

saying: "The forest is my home — the earth is my bed."

"Can you guide me to point where I can cross this stream in safety?" Graydon asked.

Silverheels folded his arms about the barrel of the long rifle that he carried, and grunted an affirmative.

"Do so at once, and I'll pay you for it," Paul said eagerly.

The Indian turned and strode away up the stream. Paul dismounted and followed, leading the horse by the bridle. After a few minutes' rapid walking, Silverheels paused and waited for the Englishman to come up. The latter was panting from weakness and the exertion of dragging the horse through thickets and over fallen logs. As he reached Silverheels' side the latter uttered the word "here," and pointed to the stream that boomed at their feet.

"Is this the place?" Paul asked quickly.

"Ugh! Wide — not deep."

By this time, it was so dark Graydon could not see the opposite shore. He did not hesitate, however, but sprang upon his horse's back and spurred into the water. After a few seconds of floundering and splashing, he reached the farther bank and rode away in the direction of the highway. Suddenly it dawned upon him that he had neglected to reward the Indian for his kindness. He reined in his steed and looked back. What was his unbounded surprise to find the subject of his thoughts close at his heels!

"Are you man or devil?" he asked sharply, half angrily.

The moon was just rising and, in its faint light, Paul could distinguish the Indian's straight and muscular form, from the background of shadowy trees-trunks beyond. He saw him fold his arms upon his breast and heard him say slowly and impressively:

"I am a Shawnee."

"How did you get across the stream?" was Paul's next question.

"A hunter does not stop for hill or stream."

"Here's money for the service you have rendered me."

Silverheels shook his head.

"You will not accept it?"

"No!"

"Why do you follow me, then?"

"Does not the white man wish to find his black friend?"

"Yes — yes!" Graydon cried eagerly. "Do you know anything of him?"

"He lies among the willows at the mouth of the creek."

"Dead!"

"No; he swam as the muskrat swims."

"He is alive, then! Thank God! Come quickly and show me where he is."

Again they proceeded, Silverheels leading the way. They crossed the trail that led toward the set-

tlement, and continued along the bank of the creek. Suddenly the Indian halted, and, pointing to a clump of willows, muttered sententiously:

"He is there."

Paul heard a strange moaning sound in the direction indicated. He leaped to the ground and ran forward, shouting his black companion's name. As he reached the clump of willows, the moaning ceased and a well-known voice cried lustily:

"Fo' de Lo'd! Marse Paul, is dat you?"

"Yes, it's I, Gumbo. Are you hurt?"

"No, Marse Paul; but I's skeered mos' to deaf."

"Why are you lying there? Get up." — And Paul stooped over the negro and assisted him to his feet. The latter stretched and rubbed his stiffened limbs, grinning all the while like an ebony satyr. Paul was overjoyed to find the faithful fellow alive and well.

"How did you get out, Gumbo?" he inquired.

"Well, I swummed to de sho'— dat is, after I'd drunk 'bout a bar'l ob water, an' been down to de bottom ob de branch a few times. You see, Marse Paul, de water ain't so swift an' rampagerous at dis p'int, an' I swummed out widout a great deal ob animosity. W'en I got to de sho', I grabbed a limb an' hung on fo 'deah life. Den I had de breaf skeered right outen me — I did!"

"How?"

"By de debil!"

'By the devil?"

"Yes, Marse Paul, de debil — de debil, fo' shuah!"

"I don't understand you. Explain."

"I was hangin' onto de limb — de water jes, swishing' me dis way an' dat — w'en I heerd somefin' come discriminatin' froo de bushes, like de debil. An' it *was* de debil! He took me by de collah an' yanked me outen de water, jes' zif I didn't weigh no mo' dan a broom-straw. Den he grunted, 'Ugh!'— jes like dat; an' says, 'black dog!' Den he lef' me; an' I jes hid my face an' laid dar, 'spectin' to be killed eb'ry minute."

Paul readily guessed the cause of the negro's terror; and asked:

"How do you know it was the devil, Gumbo?"

The latter had recovered his courage, somewhat, and replied earnestly:

"Didn't I see an' hear him, Marse Paul? I saw de h'ar all ober him, an' heerd de jingle ob bells on his hoofs. Den I saw his horns, too. I knows it was ol' Beezlybub!"

Graydon burst into a hearty laugh. He recognized in Gumbo's description a distorted picture of Silverheels. The Indian's hunting shirt and leggings of undressed deerskin accounted for the "ha'r" on his satanic majesty; the eagle feathers braided in his long black hair constituted his "horns"; and the perforated silver coins with which his moccasins were ornamented, and from which he

took his sobriquet, "Silverheels," were the "bells" that jingled on his "hoofs."

"Would you know him, if you again saw him?" Paul roguishly asked.

The negro glanced around apprehensively, and answered with great unction:

"Yes, but I doesn't keer to see him no mo' — I doesn't!"

"Well, I'm glad to find you alive. Come, let's make a final effort to reach the settlement tonight; we're in need of food and shelter."

They left the clump of willows and proceeded toward the spot where Paul had left the horse. Just as they reached it and found Prince quietly nibbling at the short grass upon the creek bank, the moon peeped from a rift in the clouds and lighted up the scene. Gumbo caught sight of Silverheels. Dropping upon his knees and clasping Paul's leg with both arms, the terrified darky cried:

"Sabe me! Sabe me, Marse Paul! Dar's dat Beezlybub debil ag'in!"

Paul was vexed at Gumbo's manifestation of abject terror, and said, angrily: "Loose my legs and get up! Do you hear? Get up — it is only an Indian."

"An Injin debil! Oh, Marse Paul, dat's worse an' mo' ob it!"

Paul dragged the trembling wretch to his feet and ordered him to mount the horse. With many side glances and starts of fear, the black obeyed.

"Big fool! Black dog!" Silverheels grunted contemptuously.

As they were ready to move off Paul asked Silverheels how far it was to the Marietta settlement.

"Does the white man mean the place where the paleface lodges stand upon the bank of the Mooseeye, as thick as wild flowers upon a sunny hillside?"

"Yes."

"When the moon is there," — And the Indian indicated a point in the sky with the muzzle of his gun — "you will be at the village of the white men."

"Will you go with us?"

The Indian nodded, and wheeling about led the way. His strides were long and rapid, and Paul had great difficulty in keeping pace with him. Seeing this, the savage hunter remarked:

"Let the white man ride, and the black dog walk."

"Why do you call my friend 'the black dog'?" Graydon asked, amused at the Indian's evident dislike for Gumbo.

"You own him — he is your slave, Ugh! He is a black dog."

"You're mistaken, he is not my slave. He's a free man — as free to come and go as you or I."

"It is strange — a black man, but not a black dog," muttered Silverheels. "Are not all black men black dogs?"

"Most of them are," Paul admitted.

Silverheels had shown a knowledge of slavery that

Graydon was surprised to find him possessing; so he inquired:

"Have you seen many black slaves — black dogs, as you call them?"

"Yes."

"Where?"

"Many eagle flights beyond the great river."— And he pointed to the south.

"When were you there?"

"As a child, I lived in the warm land where the flowers bloom all the year."

"Your people came from the South?"

"Ugh!"

"You speak good English. You're not a full-blooded Indian?"

"I am a Shawnee."

"Your mother?"

"Was a Shawnee."

"Your father?"

"Was an English officer!"

Paul had heard of such cases, but had never met with one before. Silverheels was a half-breed, then, one of the mongrel brood noted for cruelty and treachery.

"Have you always lived the life of a wild hunter?" Graydon asked, a shade of suspicion in his tone.

"The white man's tongue moulds many questions; and they fly as swiftly and surely as the leaden balls

from a rifle. Would he wound the heart of one who has befriended him?"

Paul felt the rebuke — and felt also that it was merited. A few hours before, he would have laughed at the bare idea of craving the pardon of an Indian; but now it was different. The manly, dignified answer of the red hunter impressed the fair-minded young man, as nothing else could have done. He realized that Silverheels was far more than an ignorant savage. To Paul's humble apologies, the Indian gave monosyllabic answers, and had litttle more to say during the rest of their journey. Gumbo was bringing up the rear. Suddenly he cried out:

"Marse Paul, I sees a light twinklin' on ahead dar a little ways."

"It's the village of the white men," Silverheels said, quietly; "I leave you now."

Paul turned to speak to him, but the Indian had vanished.

CHAPTER X

THE two travelers moved forward in the direction of the twinkling light, Paul leading the way. A few minutes brought them to a point where they could dimly see the Muskingum emptying its waters into the broad bosom of the Ohio. On the western point of land, formed by the junction of the two rivers, lay Fort Harmer, its lights darting scattering arrows into the gloom that overhung the two streams. On the eastern point lay the settlement, the cabins that composed it scattered in an irregular manner among those trees that had not yet felt the keen edge of the woodman's axe. The two travelers paused as the voice of the sentry at the fort, calling out the hour and announcing that all was well, was borne to their ears. Again they moved forward. A short distance further on, was the rude habitation whose light Gumbo had first seen. Just as they came opposite this cabin, its puncheon door swung open, and a tall, rawboned man emerged from the lighted interior, the flicker of the firelight following him. Paul started, and with difficulty repressed an exclamation. The man shaded his eyes a moment, with his hand, and peered into the wall of darkness. Then he shambled to the woodpile a few steps from the

door, and, picking up a large stick, turned toward the house. He had reached the door and placed one foot upon the log step, when Paul cried:

"Hello!"

"Hullo y'rself!" was the ungracious rejoinder.

"Can we obtain a night's lodging?" Paul queried.

"I don't know — who are you?"

"None should know me better than Isaac Meeks!"

The stick of wood dropped, and Isaac Meeks leaped forward into the darkness, shouting:

"Fer God's sake! Is it you, Mr. Paul, 'r y'r ghost?"

"It's I, Paul Graydon, alive and in the flesh. Will you take us in for the night, Isaac?"

"Of course I will! Who's with you?"

"Gumbo — and Prince."

By this time, Meeks had found his way to Paul's side. He caught the young man's hand and wrung it heartily. Both were trembling with excitement. Gumbo had dismounted and now stood holding the horse, and chuckling and grinning. Isaac shook hands with the darky, also, then he asked:

"Where in the world did you come from, Mr. Paul?"

"From Virginia," Graydon replied, a little coldly.

"Did you an' Gumbo come through all the way, by y'rselves?"

"Yes; where's your family, Isaac?"

"In the house. Annie's sick with a bad cold; that's what kep' us up so late."

"And — and Miss — Miss Fontanelle?"

"D' you mean Marie?"

"Yes."

"Oh! she's in the cabin along with the others. What're you Miss Fontanellein' 'bout, anyhow!"

Paul was not certain of his ground, and kept silent. If Marie had left him voluntarily, leaving no word behind her, she was *Miss Fontanelle* to him now. He would wait and see.

"How'd you know we was out here, Mr. Paul?" Meeks inquired.

"I didn't know it — I knew nothing of your whereabouts."

"You jest dropped in here by accident?"

"I set out to come to the new settlement, but I had no idea you and your — your family were here."

"Well, come into the house; we can talk after a bit — after you've had some supper. I s'pose you hain't *had* y'r supper?"

"Neither supper nor dinner."

"Goodness gracious, you must be 'most starved!" —And Isaac feelingly laid his hands over his own organs of digestion.— "Come on in. Gumbo, tie the horse to this limb. We'll find a place f'r him after while. Our cow died comin' over the mountains, an' we've sold our horses — so we hain't got no stable. You won't find very good 'commodations; but we'll do the best we can fer you. The folks'll be mighty

glad to see you an' Gumbo, Mr. Paul. We've had a rough time of it sence we left ol' Virginny', an' some of us 're purty homesick. Come right on in."

The three had reached the door of the cabin. Isaac gave a vigorous jerk at the latchstring; and the door swung open, creaking on its wooden hinges. He pushed the other two ahead of him, and entered the house, closing the door with a bang. The ruddy firelight flashed upon the faces of the newcomers and revealed to them the interior of the cabin. It consisted of one large room. A puncheon floor, covered here and there with the skins of wild animals, extended from the doorway to within a few feet of the wide, deep fireplace. The floor of the space thus left was of hard packed earth. Around the walls, were rows of wooden pegs upon which hung clothing and household utensils; and attached to the low smoke-stained rafters, by means of thongs, were large chunks of dried meat, bundles of peltries, and bunches of wild herbs and roots. A rude bedstead occupied one corner of the room, and under it nestled a clumsy trundle-bed. A few stools were scattered in front of the fire, and a rough table stood against the wall. Over the door was the hunter's rifle, bullet-pouch and powder-horn, and piled in one corner was a quantity of yellow corn.

Meeks' cabin was a type of the settlement. Its walls were of unhewn logs; the fireplace was of undressed stone; and the chimney, of sticks and dried clay. The roof was of clapboards held in place by

heavy poles, the ends of which were secured by wooden pins driven into the log walls. A window, made by cutting out a section of one of the logs in the side of the cabin, was furnished with a heavy shutter. The puncheon door was fastened by a latch and string; and additional security was obtained by the use of two strong hickory bars that extended across the inner surface of the door and rested in wooden staples upon each side.

When Isaac and the two travelers entered the room, Nancy was kneeling in front of the fireplace, making a poultice of cornmeal and dried herbs, for the little sufferer upon the bed. Her back was toward the door, and she did not notice the strangers. Marie, standing by the bedside, was holding the sick child's hand and coaxing her to take a draught of the bitter tea Nancy had brewed. She turned at the bang of the door, and stood face to face with Paul Graydon! The cup dropped from her hand; and with a cry of — "My Paul! My Paul!" — she flung herself into his arms, and burst into tears.

Annie, the sick girl, screamed in affright; and, with raised bristles and flashing fangs, two great dogs emerged from their warm corner by the chimney, growling fiercely. Nancy took in the situation at a glance, and, standing with arms akimbo and a half-pleased, half defiant look upon her face, she ejaculated:

"Well, of all things! It's Mr. Paul an' Gumbo, as sure's shootin'!"

Mrs. Meeks was a general of no mean ability. She handed stools to the visitors; allayed the sick girl's terror; and, after brushing up the hearth with the wing of a wild turkey, resumed the preparation of the poultice — all the time keeping up a rattling fire of questions and exclamations. Marie nestled at Paul's side, her hand in his and her eyes hungrily studying every lineament of his features.

"Where'd you come from, Mr. Paul?" Nancy asked.

"From Virginia," Graydon answered, as he slip his arm around Marie's waist.

"Lawzee!" Mrs. Meeks exclaimed, "Who'd you come through with?"

"With Gumbo — and Prince."

"Jest the nigger an' y'r horse?"

"Yes."

"Wy, how in the nation did you git here? Did you come all the way by land?"

"Yes. We had a toilsome and dangerous trip."

"Say, ol' woman!" Isaac broke in. "You'd better stop gabbin', an' git these men some supper. They hain't had a mite to eat sence mornin'."

"Oh!" — And Marie caught her breath.— "My Paul, you must be famished."

"Hardly so bad as that," laughed the young man; "but I'm weak with hunger."

Marie and her aunt soon had a steaming meal of

hot corn-pone, fish, milk and game, on the table. It was very appetizing to the travelers. When they had eaten their fill and the table was cleared, Paul faced Mrs. Meeks and said:

"Now, Nancy, I'm ready to talk. The reception you have given us leads me to believe you bear me no ill will. Am I right?"

"Y-e-s," she answered, hesitatingly, "I guess you're 'bout right. I don't bear you no ill will now; but that ain't sayin' that I never *did*." She uttered this last sentence rather defiantly.

Here Isaac interrupted by saying: "While you folks's fixin' up y'r differ'nces, I'll take the horse up to Colonel Sproat's stable an' feed him. He has an empty stall, an' I know he'll let me put the critter in there fer the night."

He left the cabin, accompanied by Gumbo and Johnnie. When the door had closed behind them, Nancy answered Paul's questioning look.

"Mr. Paul, I ain't a-goin' to deny nothin'. I s'picioned that you wasn't runnin' after Marie, fer no good. I didn't b'lieve you meant to marry 'er; so I packed up an' run away while you was gone. I was wrong — I see it now — but I didn't think so then; an' I acted 'cordin' to my lights. Isaac hadn't nothin' to do with it. If we could 'ave had his way, we'd still be over there in the mountains o' Virginny. As fer me, I'm mighty glad we come. Course we've seen hard times an' had lots o' bad luck; but we're here now, an' got a chance to git some land that'll

'mount to somethin' in time. We couldn't 'ave come, though, if Mrs. Lovelace hadn't bought our place — "

" Mrs. Lovelace! " cried Paul and Marie together. The latter was as much surprised as her lover. It was the first time she had heard the name mentioned in connection with the sale.

" Yes," Mrs. Meeks answered, filling and lighting her pipe, " she bought our place at a good price — an' — "

Here the hunter's wife paused abruptly and dropped her eyes confusedly.

Paul was keenly alert to everything she was saying, and now cried sharply:

" And what, Nancy? You said you were going to tell everything."

Nancy's face was very red. Its flushed appearance may have been due to the heat of the fire, but more probably it was caused by shame and confusion. Be that as it may, she straightened her tall form and replied resolutely:

" I'm a-goin' to tell the truth, the whole truth, an' nothin' but the truth! Mrs. Lovelace bought our place, an' she paid us fer leavin' the neighborhood an' takin' Marie with us. As I said, I was 'spicious of you, Mr. Paul; an' when her an' her daughter sent fer me an' Isaac to come an' see 'em, we went — "

" When was that? " Paul asked, quickly.

"The day after you left fer Richmond — I b'lieve that's where she said you'd gone."

"Go on."

"Well, w'en y'r aunt said you didn't intend to marry my gal — that you'd marry some rich woman — that you was jest foolin' Marie — I was all ready to b'lieve 'er. An' w'en she wanted to buy us out an' pay us fer leavin', I was glad to go. She said she didn't want a member o' her family to bring disgrace an' trouble 'pon us. I won't deny that her offerin' me money helped me to make up my mind to leave. But Isaac wan't to blame at all — I done it all. I see ev'rything clear now, an' I'm awful sorry I done as I did; but I thought I was actin' fer the best. I'm glad you know'd where to find us — "

"But I *didn't* know."

"You didn't?"

"No; my coming here was purely accidental. I thought Marie had grown tired of me — "

"Paul!" the young woman cried, reproachfully.

"I did, Marie! What else could I think? I didn't know where you had gone, nor why you had gone. You left no word for me, and — "

"I left a letter for you, Paul."

"For me?"

"Yes."

"With whom?"

"With your cousin, Hester Lovelace."

Mrs. Meeks smiled pityingly at her niece's sim-

plicity, and sneered: "You little dunce! That *was* a smart trick — givin' y'r letter to the very woman that wanted to marry Mr. Paul, herself! *Course* he never got it!"

The older woman arose and busied herself in preparing another poultice for the sick child moaning upon the bed.

"So my poor boy never got my letter," Marie whispered, caressing Paul's hand; "it is no wonder he thought me false and cruel. But, oh, my Paul, how I've suffered!"

She hid her face upon his shoulder. He comforted and soothed her, as only a lover knows how; and when she had regained her composure, asked:

"And what did you think of *me*, dear?"

"Just what I've always thought, Paul; that you would receive both my letters, and would never rest until you found me. But I feared that it might be years before I saw your dear face again."

"You sent me a letter from here?"

"Yes."

"I never got it — it isn't necessary to say why." — He paused sadly.— "I understand all now. You were true to me — I should have known it all the time. But I couldn't believe you false for long. Something told me that you were true, and that you were waiting and longing for me. I didn't know where to look for you; but I couldn't give you up — I couldn't rest there with Aunt Caroline and my cousin. God was with me! I've no doubt He

directed my steps to this place. Hester wanted me to marry her, and my aunt was anxious for our union. You understand now why I said I was compelled to leave there, and seek my fortune elsewhere. We've come up through great tribulation, dear one, but our sky is clearing — and all will be well!"

They sat there, side by side, at peace with themselves and all the world. Mr. Meeks and his companions returned; and the conversation became general. Isaac, in his quaint way, told of the hardships of the winter journey to the new settlement.

"Had you decided to come here, when you left Virginia?" Paul asked.

"No, we thought o' settlin' in Pennsylvany; but when we got up in there, we heard of a comp'ny o' settlers makin' the'r way to this place, so we hurried on an' j'ined 'em. An' here we all are."

He smiled benignly upon Paul and Marie, as he finished speaking. Evidently the big-hearted hunter was well pleased with the turn affairs had taken.

The fire burned low upon the hearth, and the room was in semi-darkness. It was after midnight. Annie's fever had abated, and she was sleeping quietly. The family prepared to retire for the night.

The women and children occupied the two beds, while the three men reposed upon skins spread in front of the fire. The god of slumber kissed their eyelids down — and they slept.

Before lying down, Isaac had thrown a fresh log upon the red coals. Sometime during the small

hours of the night, the sleepers were awakened by a knock at the door. Mr. Meeks sprang to his feet, and demanded: "Who's there?"

A gutteral voice replied: "If the white hunter would save his lodge, he should bestir himself. The red tongues of fire are licking over it — and they love the taste of dry wood."

"An Injin!" cried Isaac, in tones of alarm.

"Silverheels!" Paul whispered to himself.

Gumbo shook his woolly head and muttered: "De red debil!"

The three dashed out of doors, but saw no one. The stick chimney was ablaze near the top, and the flames were spreading. A few minutes of delay would have doomed the cabin. The men extinguished the fire, and returned to their places of rest; but they were nervous and wakeful, and slept little more that night.

CHAPTER XI

THERE were many reasons why the Ohio Company chose the mouth of the Muskingum, as the site of their first settlement. It was known to be a wooded, well-watered region, with a soil of unexampled fertility. The forests abounded with game and the streams were full of fish. No Indian tribe had its villages within many miles of the place; and Fort Harmer — already erected at the mouth of the river — served as an additional protection.

The sturdy New England pioneers had laid out the streets of their proposed city, divided the land into eight-acre lots, felled trees and erected huts for their habitation, and begun the cultivation of the soil, when Governor St. Clair arrived in July.

The first year was one of prosperity, if not of plenty; and at its close there were one hundred and thirty-two persons in the new settlement.

The next year brought disappointment to all, and want and suffering to many. A frost in October ruined all of the late corn and damaged much of that planted earlier. The settlers gathered their crop; but it was unpalatable and produced sickness, and the use of it was abandoned. The price of this necessary cereal rose to two dollars a bushel. Those

persons who were so fortunate as to have money, bought flour and meal of passing barges, trading up and down the river; but few could avail themselves of this opportunity.

In addition to the lack of corn, there was a scarcity of meat. The Indians had grown jealous of their white neighbors, and, in order to deprive the settlers of food, had killed and scared away much of the game in the surrounding forest. Salt was obtained with great difficulty, by sending teams to the Scioto salt-licks. It took a month or more to make the journey; and the salt was of inferior quality, and sold for eight dollars a bushel.

The winter of seventeen hundred and eighty-nine was long and severe; and by early spring many of the people were at the point of actual starvation. When summer arrived, the poorer colonists subsisted almost wholly upon the succulent tops of certain plants, which they boiled with a pinch of salt and a little meat.

A brief description of this village of log huts, in the heart of the American wilderness, as Paul Graydon found it, may not be amiss. It lay upon the eastern bank of the Muskingum, and stretched its straggling length from the shore of the Ohio, to the blockhouse known as Campus Martius, a mile up the Muskingum. Quite a group of cabins stood upon the point formed by the junction of the two rivers, and were separated from their straggling neighbors farther up the Muskingum, by a small stream

known as Tyber Creek. A few of the houses were two stories in height, of hewn timbers, and had chimneys of brick. However, these were the rare exception. A rude, wooden bridge spanned Tyber Creek and afforded means of communication between the two groups of houses. Along the shore of the Muskingum, at various points, were docks at which were moored barges, pirogues and canoes. When Isaac Meeks and family arrived in the early winter of seventeen hundred and eighty-nine, there were seventy-two families and two hundred and thirty-six men in the colony.

At the time of the arrival of Paul Graydon and his faithful black friend, Gumbo, branch settlements had been formed at Belpre — twelve miles down the Ohio, and at Waterford — twenty-five miles up the Muskingum. The Indians had grown more and more restless and dissatisfied, as the whites thus extended their colonization. However, the settlers at Marietta were not greatly exercised, as they had two strong forts, if danger threatened — Fort Harmer, just across the river, and Campus Martius. We can do no better than to describe the latter in the words of an early chronicler, who says:

"It is the handsomest pile of buildings on this side of the Allegheny mountains, and in a few days will be the strongest fortification in the territory of the United States. It stands on the margin of the elevated plain on which are the remains of ancient earthworks, thirty feet above the high bank of the

Muskingum, twenty-nine perches distant from the river, and two hundred and seventy-six from the Ohio. It consists of a regular square, having a blockhouse at each angle, eighteen feet square on the ground, and two stories high; the upper story, on the outside, or face, jutting over the lower one, eighteen inches. These blockhouses serve as bastions to a regular fortification of four sides. The curtains are composed of dwelling houses two stories high, eighteen feet wide, and of different lengths. The blockhouses and curtains are so constructed, with high roofs, etc., as to form one complete and entire building. The timber of which they are built is either sawed or hewed, four inches thick, so that the walls are very smooth; and, when the seams are pointed with mortar, will be very warm and comfortable."

Campus Martius had two gates — one in the western wall and one in the southern. In the northeastern and southwestern watch towers, small cannon were placed, to call the men from the fields and woods, in case of an Indian attack. The curtains of the fort were, in reality, rows of well-built dwellings, and contained a number of families. After this rather tedious but necessary digression, we return to our characters and take up the broken thread of our narrative.

CHAPTER XII

THE morning after his arrival in the settlement, Paul Graydon was astir early. While the women were preparing the morning meal, and Isaac and Gumbo were gone to Colonel Sproat's stable, to look after Prince, the young Englishman sauntered down to the river bank. The cabin the Meeks family occupied stood half way between the Ohio shore and Campus Martius, and about two hundred yards from the bank of the Muskingum. A minute's brisk walking brought Paul to a point where he could overlook the peaceful bosom of the smaller stream.

The sun was just rising over the eastern hills; and its warm effulgence rested upon a beauteous scene. Paul took deep draughts of the flower-scented air and feasted his eyes upon the landscape spread out before him. To the south, lay the swelling Ohio; and to the north, the sparkling Muskingum disapppeared among the wooded hills. In front of him, rose the rock-ribbed heights back of Fort Harmer. From base to pinnacle, they were covered with trees — the dark-green of the evergreens contrasting with the lighter shade the deciduous trees had but recently donned. Here and there,

the emerald sea was broken where the gray cliff thrust its wrinkled front outward, or where the pink blossoms of the redbud or the milk-white petals of the dogwood mingled with the verdant billows, like fragrant foam on a rockbound coast.

Along the river shore, stood sentinel sycamores and elms of a century's growth; and below and among them, the overhanging willows dipped their pliant fingers into the stream and dallied with the dancing waters.

A large barge was lazily crawling into the mouth of the Muskingum, and smaller craft were darting here and there. The dip of the boatmen's oars mingled with the song of birds and the sound of the chopper's ax; and over and above all, arose the laughter of barefoot children playing around the cabin doors. From a dozen chimneys, the blue smoke curled skyward; and the clank of a dragging chain, and stentorian commands, betokened that some early-rising husbandman was off to the woods or fields, with his horned team.

Paul was about to retrace his steps, when a light and fragile canoe shot swiftly and silently up the stream. Its occupant was an Indian; and a moment's observation convinced Paul that it was Silverheels. The ashen paddle rose and fell with wonderful regularity and rapidity; and, urged by the vigorous strokes, the canoe quickly disappeared from view, around the bend of the river.

"What a strange being!" the young man mut-

tered. "In some way, I feel that he is not what he seems. He has succored me and mine — and I'm strangely drawn toward him. I can't believe he's cruel and treacherous — half-breed that he is."

On returning to the cabin, he found breakfast awaiting his arrival. With a keen appetite born of his morning walk, he seated himself with the others. Isaac bent his head and mumbled a "blessing" over the food, after which he remarked:

"This ain't much of a meal to offer to the likes o' you, Mr. Paul — a man that's alluz been used to more'n a plenty; but it's the best we've got. It's been a mighty hard winter on most o' the settlers. More'n half of 'em don't hardly know now where the next meal's victuals is to come from. It's purty discouragin', I swan! But then me an' mine oughtn't to complain — we've got better'n the av'rage. You see the frost last October ruined nearly all the corn — made it so it wan't even fit to feed to the cattle. Corn's been scarce and hard to git at any price; an' a good many hadn't no money to buy with, anyhow. Then the Injins got jealous of us; an' they've killed an' scared away most o' the game within twenty miles o' the settlement. Bein' a hunter, my fam'ly hain't never been 'thout meat; an' I've swopped a right smart of it fer corn an' milk, an' such other things as we didn't have."

"But we couldn't 'ave got along, nohow, if it hadn't been fer what little money we had," put in

Nancy. "You see, there was salt an' everything to git; an' it takes a heap to feed a healthy fam'ly. I'm re'l glad I had some o' y'r aunt's gold, Mr. Paul, even if I didn't git it in jest the honestest way. It's helped to keep us; an' p'raps you'll be willin' to fergive me, when I tell you that its been the savin' o' Marie, an' all the rest of us."

Tears were standing in the poor woman's eyes; and her honest heart was throbbing with the pain of guilt and humiliation.

"For whatever you may have done amiss, I freely forgive you," Graydon said quickly; and there was the ring of sincerity in his tones. Then he went on musingly: "Perhaps it's for the best, after all. We're here together in a new country — far away from the old life and its influences. I'm sincerely thankful the money that was intended to work evil has been the means of doing good. 'Tis a blessed thing that inanimate objects will not always do our bidding!"

"Amen!" said Nancy and Isaac fervently.

Marie, who had been listening silently, now arose, and, stepping softly behind her lover, bent back his head and kissed his upturned face. Then she danced away from him, clapping her hands and laughing. Paul was a little embarrassed by his sweetheart's audacity; and his face flushed. Mr. Meeks and his wife indulged in a laugh, and Gumbo guffawed. Even the sick girl upon the bed chuckled audibly. Marie's proceeding had the ef-

fect of banishing all reminiscent sorrows and future forebodings. Everyone felt more at ease, than at any time since Paul's arrival.

Johnnie, who had left the table and gone to the bedside of his sister, now cried:

"Oh, Mam! Annie's broke out with somethin'!"

"What!" Isaac ejaculated, springing to his feet.

"Smallpox!" shrieked Nancy, wringing her hands.

They gathered around the bed, all gesticulating and talking at the same time. The sick child began to cry.

"Do you feel worse?" Nancy anxiously inquired.

"Yes," Annie sobbed, drawing her lithe little body into a knot and hiding her head beneath the covers.

"Where do you feel worse, Annie dear?" Marie asked, kindly.

'I — I — don't — don't — know!"

Paul saw at once that the child was simply frightened, and that whatever the disease, she was not seriously ill. Therefore he said:

"Our words and actions have alarmed her; let's keep quiet. Isaac, have you no physician in the colony?"

"Yes; got a good one — Dr. Jabez True. He lives jest across Tyber Creek. Do you think we'd better 'ave him, Mr. Paul?"

"Certainly!" Paul answered. "If this disease be smallpox, we should know it immediately."

"Johnnie, run down an' tell Doc True to come up here, right away."

In an incredibly short space of time Johnnie returned, accompanied by the physician.

Dr. True was a young man of thirty years, tall, slightly stooped, and somewhat ungainly in his movements. His forehead was low and his brows were bulging. A large, aquiline nose overhanging a wide, but firm, mouth did not add to his facial beauty. But his was a countenance beaming with the warmth of a big heart.

"Good morning — good morning!" he cried, jovially, as he entered the door. "Ah! the little girl's sick, eh? Pulse, a little hurried; tongue, coated; and skin covered with an eruption. Just open the door a little wider, that I may see better. Thank you. Aye, aye, I see! You thought you had a case of smallpox, eh?"

"We didn't know —" Nancy began; but the doctor held up his finger and stopped her.

"Well, do you know *now?*" he asked, his small and restless gray eyes twinkling merrily.

"No," Mrs. Meeks admitted, "I don't."

"No! Well, it's fortunate *somebody* does. Your daughter has a very mild attack of measles — nothing more. All she needs is to be kept warm and quiet. I wish you good morning."

Dr. True withdrew from the cabin; but the sunshine that he had brought with him remained. As

he turned the corner of the house, Paul remarked: "What a pleasant gentleman!"

"He's a good doctor an' a good man," Isaac commented; "an' I don't know what the sick people 'ld 'ave done here this winter, if it hadn't been fer him. He went in all kinds o' weather — never stopped fer nothin'— an' never got a cent fer his services. He's —"

"Look here, Isaac Meeks!" his wife vociferated. "If you want anything to eat fer dinner, you'd better take some corn over to Colonel Stacey's, an' grind it on the hand-mill. Ther' ain't a pint o' meal in the house."

"All right," yawned the humble Isaac, as he prepared to do her bidding.

"Isaac," Paul inquired, "do you know where Gumbo and I can obtain temporary lodgings? Of course we can't think of quartering ourselves upon you."

"You're both welcome to stay, if you can put up with the fare," was Mrs. Meeks' rejoinder.

"We can't accept your kind invitation," Paul replied, quickly; "you're overcrowded already — then, it would not be proper for me to stay here with Marie."

"Perhaps you can obtain quarters at Campus Martius," suggested Marie.

"Just the thing!" cried Isaac. "They've got room up there, I'll be bound. Jest wait a little

while till I trot over to Colonel Stacey's an' grind this corn, an' I'll go up with you."

Isaac was gone about a half hour. When he returned — panting and sweating from his exertions, for the day was growing warm — he was accompanied by a young man of about twenty-four years, to whom Mrs. Meeks and Marie accorded a hearty greeting.

Isaac said: "This is John Stacey, Mr. Paul. He's a son o' the colonel — an' a chip off the ol' block. I hope you an' him 'll be good friends; fer him an' his folks has been mighty kind to us. He's goin' up to Campus Martius with us."

The two young men shook hands and looked upon each other admiringly. Both were erect, broad-shouldered and athletic — perfect specimens of physical manhood. As they moved off in the direction of the fort, Stacey said, laughingly:

"I welcome you to the settlement, Mr. Graydon, although I'd fain be your rival."

"I don't understand you," Paul returned, smilingly.

"Mr. Meeks informs me that you're Miss Fontanelle's betrothed."

"I am," was the curt reply. And Paul looked the young man full in the face.

Stacey made a mock gesture of despair, and answered good-humoredly: "I abandon the field, then. I've greatly admired Marie — Miss Fontanelle; but I'm clever enough to know that I have

not the ghost of a chance, now. In fact, I doubt if I ever *had* a chance — she never encouraged me. It was a one-sided affair. You have a prior claim — I accept the inevitable. A man of gentle birth, who will follow a woman into such a wilderness as this, deserves her; and I will fight for you, if necessary, to see that you get her."

Graydon was greatly confused by this unexpected confession, and hardly knew what to do or say. However, he managed to put forth his hand, and murmur an almost inaudible — "Thank you." John Stacey took the proffered hand and wrung it heartily, saying:

"The man to whom I give my hand, I give my friendship; and I promise you that you shall never have cause to accuse me of double dealing."

This conversation had been carried on in low tones; and neither Isaac nor Gumbo, who followed the young men at a little distance, were aware of its import. The negro now called to Paul, asking:

"Say, Marse Paul! What kin' ob place is dat whar we's gwine?"

"What place?" returned Graydon, without looking back.

"Dat Grampus Margaret."

"It's a fort."

John Stacey laughed uproariously at the negro's pronunciation; which caused Gumbo to inquire:

"W'at is it you calls de place, Marse Paul?"

"Campus Martius."

"Does dey call it Trampus Marchus, 'kase de sojers am alluz trampin' an' marchin'?"

"I suppose so," answered Paul, half dreamily; while Stacey and Isaac bent double, with suppressed merriment.

They entered at the western gate of the fort—over which Winthrop Sargent, secretary of the territory, had his office — and, turning to the right, sought the quarters of Governor Arthur St. Clair, in the southwestern blockhouse. They found him seated in a large, bare room on the ground floor, busily writing at a spindle-legged secretary. He nodded to them, as they entered, and begged them to be seated. They found seats upon a long bench running along one side of the room; and awaited the governor's pleasure. After writing furiously for some minutes, St. Clair laid down his quill and turned toward them. He was a dignified, smooth-faced man of fifty-six years, with a countenance seamed with care, and something about his eyes and mouth, which seemed to portend the great sorrow that was to come upon him. His dress consisted of a full-skirted coat of blue cloth, from the sleeves of which peeped folds of lace, a maroon colored waistcoat, brown trousers, black hose and silver-buckled shoes. His shirt-front was a mass of billowy ruffles. In answer to the governor's direct question, John Stacey said:

"Governor St. Clair, I beg leave to introduce to you, Mr. Paul Graydon and his black friend, Gum-

bo, from Virginia. They arrived in the settlement last night, and are desirous of procuring temporary quarters."

The governor shook hands with the two newcomers, and scrutinized them keenly. Motioning them to be seated again, he said:

"You are from Virginia, Mr. Graydon?"

"Yes, sir."

"A Virginian by birth?"

"An Englishman."

"So I thought. And this black man?"

"He's a friend of mine."

"Your servant — your slave?"

"No, sir," Paul replied stoutly; "a freeman — as free as air."

"You gave him his freedom?"

"Yes, sir."

"A noble act! From your manner and speech, I judge that you're a gentleman of education and refinement, Mr. Graydon. May I inquire what brings you here?"

"To seek my fortune —"

"An' to foller up one o' the purtiest an' sweetest little gals in the country," Isaac completed.

The governor's lips twitched — and then a smile irradiated his features. Paul's face was scarlet from mortified pride. St. Clair recovered his composure, and asked hurriedly:

"To whom do you refer, Mr. Meeks?"

"To my niece."

"Miss Fontanelle?"

"Yes," replied Isaac, proudly.

"A winsome lass," remarked Governor St. Clair, half musingly; "and the friend of my daughter Louise. I hope you may like the place, Mr. Graydon — and that you may succeed in whatever good thing you may undertake. You've come at a time of great want and distress, however. May I ask what you mean to do?"

"He's a-goin' to help me in gittin' game fer the settlement, for the present," Meeks interjected before Paul could frame a reply.

"Very well," was the governor's answer, "we need skillful hunters; and, if Mr. Meeks recommends you, I know there's no question of your prowess. In regard to quarters, you must see General Putnam or Colonel Sproat. Either will obtain a place for you."

Then he turned to Gumbo, and asked:

"My black friend, do you understand the care of horses?"

"Y-e-s, sah," Gumbo stammered.

"Would you like to care for mine?"

The negro studied for a moment, then he replied: "Yes, sah; if I can take keer ob Marse Paul's hoss, Prince, 'long wid yours."

"That can be arranged satisfactorily. Ah! here is my daughter."

A vigorous-looking young woman of eighteen summers entered the apartment, with elastic step

and sprightly air. She had a beautiful oval face and soulful eyes; and was clad in a close-fitting riding habit of dark green cloth. Going directly up to her father, she threw her arms around his neck and kissed him. Then she stepped back and, tapping her skirt with the whip that she held in her gauntleted hand, she said:

"I am off for a canter, father. I—"

Here she became aware of Graydon's presence. She stopped speaking suddenly; her eyes fell, and a pink flush mantled her cheeks. Governor St. Clair stepped forward and introduced the two. After shaking hands with Paul, Miss St. Clair cordially greeted the others — not excepting Gumbo. As the men were passing out, she detained John Stacey and held a short conversation with him, in an undertone. When all had gone, Governor St. Clair reseated himself at the secretary; but before resuming his writing he asked suddenly:

"What do you think of him, daughter?"

"Of whom, father?" returned Louise, in an artless way.

"You know! Of young Graydon?"

"He is handsome and noble-looking."

Arthur St. Clair shook his finger impressively, as he said:

"You mustn't lose your heart there, Louise; another has won him."

"Yes, I know — John Stacey told me," was all the reply she made, as she left the room.

CHAPTER XIII

On leaving Governor St. Clair's apartments, our friends directed their steps toward the south-east blockhouse, where General Rufus Putnam and family at that time lived. The old Revolutionary officer was just emerging from his door, as the men came up. He was a hale man, a little past the prime of life, but muscular and active. His form was tall and commanding; his features were rugged and resolute. An injury to one eye gave a peculiar, half-sinister expresssion to his face, that impressed itself upon the mind of the beholder. He was a firm, brave man, of great executive ability, brusque and abrupt in his manners, but kind-hearted and humane, withal.

"Good morning, Stacey," was his greeting, as the visitors drew near. "Present your companions."

"This is Isaac Meeks — you know Mr. Meeks, general?"

"Oh, yes! I know Meeks. Go on."

"And this is Mr. Paul Graydon of Virginia — "

"And that's his black slave, I suppose!" Putnam interrupted.

Paul Graydon's English temper aroused; and he

made no attempt to conceal his irritation, as he replied hotly:

"General Putnam, it seems a little strange to me, that one who is the founder of a colony whose charter contains an article prohibiting involuntary servitude, should be unable to realize that a white man and a black man may be friends and associates, and yet *both* remain free!"

"He's *not* your slave, then?" the general returned, his impassive face showing not the slightest change of expression."

"No, sir."

"I suppose you gave him his freedom?"

Paul nodded stiffly; he was growing tired of being plied with questions. But General Putnam continued:

"You hail from Virginia?"

"Yes."

"From what part do you come?"

"The Shenandoah valley."

"You're one of those the Indians call 'Long Knives,' then. Are you and Isaac Meeks old acquaintances?"

"We are."

"Well, I hope you're as good a hunter as he. But there's one thing about which I wish to caution all of you — especially you hot-blooded young fellows. Avoid all altercations with roving Indians. They're growing more and more restless and surly. We shall have trouble with them in the not dis-

tant future; but I don't wish to have the war precipitated. With our scattered settlements, our incomplete defences and unorganized militia, we're in no fit condition to withstand a prolonged and vigorous siege. When we've raised another crop of corn and vegetables, and strengthened our fortifications, possibly we may be able to repel their attacks. Now, Mr. Graydon, there's a vacant room in the northeast blockhouse, that you are welcome to occupy; and you can move your effects there, as soon as you choose. Stacey, you'll show the gentleman the place. I bid you all good morning."

He strode away in the direction of the governor's office.

By evening, Paul and Gumbo were installed in their quarters. The other inhabitants of the fortress made liberal contributions to the meager stock of cooking utensils and household goods, that Mrs. Meeks had lent the two; and as Gumbo looked upon the array, he chuckled:

"Ki yi! Marse Paul, dis seems like ol' days in my mammy's cabin 'way back in ol' Virginny. We'll hab good times — neber fear. I's a splendiferous cook, and you's a mighty ramrod — "

"You mean Nimrod, Gumbo."

"Dat's w'at I said, Marse Paul. You's a mighty Nimrod, an'll furnace plenty ob meat an' co'nmeal; an' I'll do de cookin' an' 'tend to Prince an' Marse 'Clair's hosses. All I's 'feared ob is dat w'en yo'

marries dat purty little gal, you won't hab no use fo' ol' Gumbo."

And the negro looked beseechingly at his former master.

"I'll not marry until I've a home and land of my own," Paul replied almost sadly; "and I've no money to purchase land. However, you shall have a home with us always."

"I's ober joyful to hear you say dat, Marse Paul. 'T'ould a-broke dis nigger's heart to tink dat you'd eber git tired ob habin' him 'round. I's gwine down now, to bring Prince up an' put him in de stable wid Marse 'Clair's cattle."

After supper, Paul went to the home of Isaac Meeks. The air within doors was warm; and the two lovers left the cabin and strolled down to the bank of the Muskingum. The scene was one of peace and quiet, giving no hint of the lurking danger that ever hovered near. No harsher sound was heard, than the ripple of the water at their feet, or the tinkle of cowbells in the paddock near at hand. Seating themselves upon a fallen tree trunk, they talked over the past and made plans for the future.

"I see little opportunity of procuring land here, without money," Paul said; "and, without land and home, what can one do toward supporting a family? Land we must have, Marie — land upon which we can erect a home of our own, let it be ever so humble."

"Colonel Stacey told Uncle Isaac, a few days ago,

that the Ohio Company intends to donate a large section of land, to actual settlers, this summer and fall," was Marie's answer.

"Where is this tract situated?" he asked, eagerly.

"A number of miles up the Muskingum. Uncle says the valley is level and very fertile — just as it is here; and that, if a colony is formed, he will go."

Graydon's face brightened. He thought he saw a way out of his difficulties. "I'll go, too," he replied, "and enter land. Then, when I have a house and a clearing, we shall be married."

She patted his tanned cheek and murmured:

"It's too bad that my boy should be compelled to leave all that makes life worth living, and come into this wild country, where there is nothing but want and danger — and all for my sake."

He tenderly drew her to him, and whispered: "It's no sacrifice! I am pleased that it's so. We'll make our own way, sweetheart."

They sat for some time in silence. Suddenly she cried: "Oh! did you meet the governor's eldest daughter today? She and I are good friends."

"I met her — yes."

"Did you fall in love with her?" she roguishly interrogated.

"No."

"She is beautiful."

"Indeed?"

"And clever and accomplished."

"I've no doubt."

"And yet you didn't lose your heart?"

"I had lost it already."

In the starlight he saw a pair of mischievous eyes and two pouting lips — but it is not incumbent upon us to say what he did. Then he held the young woman at arm's length and said:

"Now, my sweet inquisitor, allow me to catechise you."

"Very well."

"Do you know a young man of the settlement, John Stacey by name?"

"I do."

"He's a handsome, manly fellow?"

"Yes."

"And one any woman might love."

"True."

Paul was growing a little uneasy; Marie was admitting too much. He went on:

"In fact, an attractive young man, in many respects."

"Indeed, he is."

"Do you know of any woman that loves him?"

"I do!"

Paul almost lost his breath. His words were barely audible, as he finished:

"To whom do you refer?"

"His mother!" — And she laughed roguishly. Presently she said in all seriousness:

"No, my Paul, I love none but you. Say what you will, I know what you have sacrificed for my

sake. Had you loved your cousin, you would be married and happy today."

"Married, perhaps; but happy — no," was the unhesitating reply. "I lived under the shadow of the institution of slavery about as long as I could bear it. I'm sincerely thankful I've cast my lot in a territory whose inhabitants do not traffic in human life. Some day it will take a long and bloody war to kill the monster which, by that time, will be sapping the energies of the best people of the South."

Paul Graydon's words were prophetic. A monument erected to the memory of Washington County soldiers, who fell in the great struggle he foresaw, stands near where he and his betrothed were, that night, sitting.

When they returned to the Meeks cabin, Paul was anxious to discover what Isaac knew of Silverheels; and asked about the warning of the night before.

"The voice sounded like that of a redskin," was Isaac's evasive answer.

"Perhaps it was one of your neighbor's," Paul suggested.

Isaac shook his head.

"Injin talk, clear through! He acted jest like one, too; give the alarm an' run away in the dark. A white man 'ld 'ave staid to help put the fire out."

"But he *did* give us warning. Would an Indian have done that?"

"That very question's been puzzlin' me all day; an' I can't come to but one c'nclusion."

"And that is?"

"That the feller at the door was a halfbreed called Silverheels. He hangs 'round the settlements, at times, an' pr'tends to be very friendly — but you can't trust an Injin; an' he's got Injin in him."

"Where does this halfbreed live, Isaac?"

Mr. Meeks filled and lighted his pipe, before replying:

"He has a hut some'rs up the Muskingum — 'r Moose Eye, as the Injins all call it. As near as I know, he's a halfbreed Shawnee that's left his tribe, fer some reason. He talks good English; an' some folks say he has some book learnin' — I don't know. One thing I *do* know: I wouldn't trust him as fer's I could throw a bear by the tail! He's a Injin — an' the worst kind, fer he's a Shawnee."

"Are the Shawnees worse than other Indians, Isaac?"

"They are the cruelest, bloodthirstiest people on earth! Ther's nothing too mean fer a Shawnee to do."

"They're brave, are they not?"

"Yes, ther's no gainsayin' that they're brave. But 'taint no use talkin', Mr. Paul; a redskin ain't fit to live! You mustn't put no confidence in 'em, 'r you'll regret it the longest day you live."

When Paul reached the fort he found the gate closed for the night, and had some trouble gaining admittance. He dropped asleep almost as soon as he touched his bed; but spent a restless night dreaming

of famines and Indian encounters. At early dawn he arose, and, snatching a few mouthfuls of food, set out upon a hunting expedition, accompanied by Isaac Meeks and John Stacey.

CHAPTER XIV

SPRING with all its beauties came and went. But there was neither feasting nor merrymaking for the poor colonists at Marietta and the outlying settlements. Gaunt want stalked beside them in the woods and fields, and flashed his white teeth at their cabin doors. Sickness — caused mainly by the scant quantity and poor quality of food — prevailed to an alarming extent; and Dr. Jabez True got little rest or sleep. He made frequent visits to Belpre and Waterford, beside attending the sick at Marietta. All this he did without the hope or thought of receiving adequate compensation for his services. His was a life of self-sacrifice; and he gave his best years to those who could pay him in nothing but tears and sobs. Peace to his ashes!

With all their sickness, want and worry, the Marietta colonists were courageous and hopeful, if not at all times blithe and cheerful. Each lent a helping hand, and, in so doing, forgot a part of his own deprivation.

Paul Graydon and John Stacey became fast friends. They hunted and fished — sometimes accompanied by Isaac Meeks; and many were the pleasant and profitable hours they spent together. They were congenial companions, and enjoyed the

excitement of a hunter's life; while their efforts enabled the settlers the better to eke out an existence. It was a luckless day, indeed, when they did not return bearing some worthy trophy of their prowess. And yet the day came when they were forced to acknowledge to themselves, that their skill and cunning had availed naught, and to return empty handed.

Marie Fontanelle and Louise St. Clair had been close companions ever since the date of the former's arrival in the colony. The advent of Paul in no way interfered with their friendly intercourse. What Louise was to Marie, John was to Paul; and, as a consequence, the four spent much time together. They rode on horseback through the green and shady aisles of the forest; boated upon the rivers; and rambled through the settlement, at will. As the season advanced, however, they grew more circumspect, and seldom went far beyond sight of the village; for the Indians daily grew more surly and threatening. At this time, the savages did not approach the borders of the settlement, but lay in wait down the Ohio or up the Muskingum, to wreak vengeance upon some unwary traveler or venturesome hunter.

Paul and Marie, when alone, often talked of their absent friends and wondered why they were not lovers. They were so well suited to each other. The fates willed it otherwise, however. It was patent to all observers, that John preferred Marie and that

Louise was partial to Paul. When the four were together, Paul was more often Louise's companion, leaving Marie to the care of John.

One beautiful June Sunday, Rev. Daniel Story, who had come to the colony in the spring of seventeen hundred and eighty-nine, was preaching to his congregation at Campus Martius. At that time services were held in the upper story of the northwest blockhouse. The room had been fitted with a rude desk and benches; and seated about two hundred persons. On this particular morning, it was comfortably filled with a mixed assembly in motley garb. The high-born dame sat, cheek by jowl, with the backwoods slattern; and the revolutionary cocked hat was on intimate terms with the coonskin cap. Like their New England sires, many of the men had come to church bearing their firearms; and their guns, stacked in the corners of the room, gave the place the appearance of an arsenal.

The balmy air, soporific with the moist, spicy smell of the green woodland, stole through the narrow openings in the log walls and soothed into slumber more than one devout believer. A gold-banded bumble-bee, his sturdy legs laden with the pollen of the pumpkin blosssoms in the fields beyond the fortress, floated in on the fragrant tide, and took infinite pleasure in buzzing and booming here and there, and undoing the work the breeze had done.

The minister was a tall, slender young man, with pale face and stooped shoulders; but the tones of

his voice were deep and sonorous. He read from closely written manuscript; and a profound hush fell upon the audience, and one and all listened attentively to what he was saying. As he proceeded, he touched upon the Indians and the duties of the settlers toward the benighted heathen.

"We should deal gently with them," he said, "for the sake of the Father of all. If we, having the light of the Sacred Word to guide us, persecute and oppress them, how great shall be our punishment! They are ignorant and know not what they do; we are enlightened and know good from evil. Let us beware that we err not!"

His words created a stir. A breezy murmur ran through the congregation.

The minister continued:

"We should give the red men no cause for jealousy or envy. At present we are at peace with them; we should strive to —"

Here he was interrupted by a disturbance in the rear of the house. A coatless, breathless man had dashed through the western gate of the fort and bounded up the stairs. He now stood at the door of the room in which the people were assembled, sweat dripping from his sunburned face and his limbs trembling with exertion and excitement.

"Is Dr. True here?" he hurriedly inquired, as he doffed his cap and closely scanned the faces before him.

"What's wanted, my good man?" the minister inquired.

"I want Dr. True, and I want him immediately. Is he here?"

"Here I am," cried the latter, as he hastily arose and advanced toward the door. "Is some one seriously ill?"

The members of the congregation craned their necks to catch the reply; but the man dropped his voice to a semi-whisper and his answer was lost.

"Is that true — can it be possible!" was Dr. True's involuntary exclamation, as he crushed his hat upon his head and followed the man from the room. As the two hurriedly descended the stairway they talked in ordinary tones, and bits of the conversation floated into the room above. Those near the door caught the words, "Indians — two killed and one wounded — attacked the boat — strangers — hid in the willows."

This was enough. Many sprang to their feet; a few started for the door, and all were talking. The clergyman sought to restore order in vain. Colonel Ebenezer Sproat drew his herculean form of six feet-four to its full height and bellowed:

"Cut it short, parson! You'll have to give us the rest some other time! There's been an Indian scrimmage somewhere; and somebody may be needing help. Come on, men; let's see what it all means!"

Catching up their arms, the men crowded through

the door and thundered down the steps, in hot pursuit of the strange messenger and Dr. True. The women and children, with pale faces, huddled together and conversed in low, awestruck tones.

"Marie," Paul cried, "you remain with Louise at her home, until we ascertain the cause of the alarm. Come, Stacey, let's overtake the man and question him. Do you know whence he hails?"

"From Belpre," John replied, as he followed Paul out of the room.

"From Belpre? Then the attack has not been made near here."

"No."

Young and fleet of foot, they passed those who had preceded them down the stairway, and soon overtook the doctor and his companion.

"Have the Indians attacked some one?" Paul inquired of the stranger.

The man nodded vigorously and quickened his pace toward the Ohio shore. Just at this moment Colonel Sproat came up, puffing like an over-driven horse.

"Say!" he shouted at the top of his voice. "Stop and explain! Has there been a brush with the Indians?"

Dr. True answered in the affirmative; but the messenger kept a dogged silence.

Incensed at what he considered the fellow's surliness, Colonel Sproat leaped forward and, catching

the man by the arm, lifted him from his feet and shook him as a dog shakes a rat.

"Come — out with it!" the enraged colonel cried hoarsely.

Released from the giant's grasp, the man tenderly rubbed his injured member and said in a crestfallen way:

"The Indians attacked a pirogue and killed one man and wounded two others."

"Where?"

"Three miles above Belpre."

"When?"

"Early this morning."

"Who were the men?"

"Traders from down the river."

"Where are the wounded men?"

"At Belpre."

"And you came for the doctor?"

"Yes."

"What became of the Indians?"

"They were in a large canoe when they attacked the pirogue. The traders killed several of them; and the others landed upon the Ohio shore, and are probably hid in the woods."

"How many were there?"

"Nine or ten."

"What tribe?"

"I don't know to a certainty — probably a wandering band of Shawnees."

"No doubt — no doubt," the colonel said musingly. "Well, that's all I want to know — if I did have to *shake* it out of you. Next time, young man, answer civil questions; and you won't get such rough treatment."

Quite a crowd had collected by this time. The messenger and the doctor hurried on to where a long canoe lay, in which were seated two men. The doctor and his companion stepped in, the paddles dipped, and they soon disappeared down the stream.

After watching the canoe out of sight, Colonel Sproat said to the group that surrounded him: "There's a warning in this at any rate — a warning to all of us. We must keep an eye on the Delawares and Wyandots at the headwaters of the Muskingum."

"Why, this attack wasn't made by them!" exclaimed Commodore Whipple.

"I'm not so sure of that — " Colonel Sproat began; but the doughty commodore interrupted him by saying:

"The man who came for Dr. True said they were Shawnees."

"True; but he wasn't certain. I believe we shall find they were Delawares or Wyandots. I reason on it in this way: If they were Shawnees, what did they mean by making an attack above Belpre? Surely they have sense enough to know that their retreat down the river'll be cut off? And their home is on the Scioto."

"But how could the Delawares, or Wyandots come down the Muskingum, pass this place, and gain the Ohio, without our knowing it?" asked Winthrop Sargent, secretary of the colony.

"By silently drifting down in the night, probably; but my idea is that they did not pass here at all."

"What course did they take, if they didn't come this way?" asked Whipple.

"They traveled overland."

Peals of hearty laughter greeted the development of the colonel's theory. Gaining control of his feelings at last, the commodore gave a hitch to his baggy trousers and said:

"Went overland, did they, colonel? Queer sort of voyage, I must say — voyaging overland in a canoe, without chart or compass! Shiver my bowsprit, but they must be descendants of old Noah! Here's an old barnacle that's plowed the seas for years — and ought to be there now — but he never heard of such a voyage as that!"

Colonel Sproat's jolly face was wreathed in smiles; and he did not resent the commodore's bantering. He replied simply:

"They didn't have a canoe."

"But they *did!*" Winthrop Sargent insisted.

"After they reached the Ohio — yes," admitted Colonel Sproat.

"Oh! Well, where did they get it?"

"Stole it from settlers in Belpre, or vicinity."

"You are simply surmising all this, aren't you, colonel?"

"Yes."

Again the crowd laughed at the big, good-natured colonel; but their merriment was cut short by a few words from Colonel Stacey, father of Paul Graydon's friend. The old gentleman quietly remarked:

"I'm firm in the belief that Sproat's right. As many of you know, I was a prisoner among the Indians at one time; and I know much of their habits of warfare. It isn't at all improbable that the Delawares have done just what Sproat thinks."

This closed the discussion. The excitement having subsided, the people wended their way homeward to partake of their meager dinners.

Marie spent the afternoon with Louise St. Clair, at the latter's home. An hour or two before sunset, the four young people left the fort and sauntered down to the Muskingum.

As they were leaving, Governor St. Clair followed them to the door and admonished them to be cautious and not to go beyond the outskirts of the village. His last words were:

"Young men, I see that you are unarmed. Perhaps it is as well; but I'm apprehensive that those marauding savages haven't left the vicinity of the settlement. They're bent on murder and plunder; and they'll not abandon the field until they have sated their appetites. Go; but be wary. I shall not rest easy until I know of your safe return."

Louise tenderly kissed him and called him a dear, foolish old father. Stacey and Graydon assured him they would protect their companions, and, ere he could frame a reply, the four were off for the river. They embarked in Stacey's cedar dugout — the young women at the paddles — and glided swiftly out of the mouth of the Moose Eye, into the Ohio. They permitted the canoe to float with the current, and with joke and song whiled away the care-free moments.

Reaching a point two miles below the settlement, they decided they had gone far enough and made preparations to return. As Marie and Louise skillfully and swiftly turned the prow of the boat upstream, Paul caught sight of a large, dark object moving out from the overhanging bushes upon the Ohio shore. One glance told him it was a canoe; and Paul Graydon's heart stood almost still, as he made the horrifying discovery that it was filled with Indians!

The sun was low upon the western horizon; and the long, narrow canoe was but dimly visible as it silently shot through the shadows cast by the trees along the shore. At the time of Paul's discovery, it was fully one hundred yards to the rear of the boat occupied by him and his friends. There were eight or ten Indians in it; and four half-naked, brawny savages were wielding the paddles. It was at once evident to Paul that the red men were hug-

ging the shore, for the purpose of remaining unseen until they were close upon the party of whites.

Stacey was seated in the bow; Graydon occupied the stern, and the two girls had places in the middle; and all sat facing the prow. Without a word, Paul leaned forward and took the paddle from Marie's hand. Then he said, in a low tone:

"John, take the other paddle. We're in great danger — there's no time for explanation. Girls, trim the canoe and sit perfectly quiet. Now — together!"

Propelled by the vigorous strokes of the young athletes, the light boat fairly flew. At each dip of the paddles, it seemed to lift itself and to skim the surface of the river, like a bird. Stacey implicitly obeyed his friend, looking neither to the right nor to the left as he bent to the arduous work. Louise and Marie placed their white hands upon the sides of the vibrating canoe, to steady its dangerous swaying, kept their eyes fixed upon the distant hilltops, bathed in rays of the setting sun, and uttered no word. Paul, his hat thrown off, his long brown locks tossing in the wind and his dark face set and stern, anxiously glanced over his shoulder from time to time and noted, with growing fear, that their pursuers were steadily gaining.

The Indians drew nearer and nearer. Only a few yards separated them when the savages emitted yells of triumph and discharged their firearms at the

helpless fugitives. The rocking of the canoes prevented correct aim, however, and the whizzing balls did no harm, spattering the water and burying themselves in the side of the dugout.

"Down, girls — down!" Paul panted breathlessly. "Together, John — steady!"

They were fully a mile and a half from the settlement — and the Indians were pressing them hard. One gigantic brave stood in the bow of the canoe, directing the red paddlers and encouraging them to greater efforts. At the critical moment — when it appeared to Paul that there was no salvation for them — succor came from an unexpected quarter.

The sharp crack of a rifle rang out upon the evening air, and a puff of white smoke issued from the willows upon the Ohio shore. The big brave in the bow of the pursuing canoe threw up his hands and fell backward among his warriors, creating consternation and confusion that threatened to swamp the overladen craft. The paddlers dropped their paddles and threw overboard the body of their fallen chieftain, righted the course of their drifting boat, and again took up the pursuit. But stimulated by the unexpected aid, Paul and his companions were rapidly drawing away from them.

Again the rifle of the concealed marksman spoke, and, in answer, another Indian sank into the bottom of the canoe. Discouraged by the death of their two companions, and realizing that they could not overtake the fugitives — ere the latter drew too near

the settlement — the red men turned about and sullenly paddled down the stream. At that moment a third canoe — containing but a single occupant — dashed from the sheltering bank and sped swiftly toward the middle of the stream. Reaching a point directly astern of the dugout containing the whites, the stranger sprang to his feet and uttering the blood-curdling warwhoop of the Shawnees, fired a parting shot at the retreating Indians. Then he dropped his rifle, caught up his paddle, and quickly overtook the party he had succored. The lone warrior was Silverheels!

The reverberating reports of the guns had reached the ears of another boatload of young people farther up the river. They had hastened toward the village, shouting the alarm as they went. Now the sullen boom of the cannon at Fort Harmer floated out upon the still evening air, and was answered by the hoarse barks of those at Campus Martius. The excited people caught up their weapons and hurried to the water front. Some of them sprang into boats and set off in the direction of the firing, while others remained to defend their homes, fearing an immediate attack.

As the Shawnee came up with the almost exhausted fugitives, Paul exclaimed:

"Silverheels!"

"Ugh!" was the guttural reply. "Are the white pigeons unhurt?"

"They are unhurt — but very badly frightened," was the reply.

"How can we ever repay you?" Marie exclaimed as she looked up and shuddered.

"The Shawnee wants nothing," Silverheels answered proudly. "He knows how to revenge himself upon his enemies!"

"Accept our sincere thanks, at least," cried Stacey, speaking for the first time since the pursuit began. Louise sat and shivered, but said nothing.

Silverheels grunted a reply and, with two strokes of his paddle, shot his canoe ahead of them and led the way toward the settlement.

CHAPTER XV

As the two canoes drew near the village a flotilla came to meet them. The dip of many oars, the voices of those in the boats, the screams and shouts of those on shore, and the vociferous barking of a dozen curs combined to turn the quiet of the Sabbath evening into a pandemonium. Paul and his party were deluged with questions, to all of which they returned brief answers, as they pushed on toward the landing. Silverheels attempted to escape into the mouth of the Muskingum; but he was headed off by the half delirious colonists and compelled to land with the others.

As the canoe containing Marie and Louise touched the beach, two stalwart settlers waded into the water and lifted them ashore. Among those assembled at the water's edge were Isaac Meeks and Nancy, and Governor St. Clair and his younger daughter. The governor, his features twitching and the tears in his eyes, placed an arm around each of his children and murmured fervently:

"Thank God, Louise, you are unharmed!"

Isaac gave Marie a bear-like hug and capered about in a frenzy of joy; while Nancy caught her niece to her heart and sobbed aloud. The Staceys

were there to congratulate John on his escape, and Gumbo was at hand to receive Paul. The negro came forward, his black face shining with delight, and, clutching the young Englishman by both hands, swayed to and fro, laughing and crying by turns.

"I'se pow'ful glad to see you — I is, Marse Paul!" he blubbered. "Dem Injins didn't done kill you, did dey?"

Paul replied in the negative.

"Is you sure, Marse Paul?"

Graydon answered affirmatively.

"An' dey didn't sculp you?"

"No; I'm uninjured, Gumbo."

"Well, isn't dis nigger right down glad! Kase w'at in de worl', Marse Paul, 'ld you do wid de whole top ob y'r head cl'ar off, an' de piece manipulatin' roun' de woods in the pocket ob a red debil?"

This question was beyond the scope of Paul's intellect; and he wisely declined to answer. He patted the darky upon the back, and assured him that the Indians had failed to inflict a wound upon any of the party. Then, turning to Governor St. Clair, he said:

"I'm chagrined that this adventure should have befallen us, governor, although I'm sincerely thankful that it has ended so happily. Bestow all blame upon me — I should have heeded your words of caution."

"No!" Louise cried, catching her father's hand

and looking at him appealingly. "He's not at all to blame. I —"

Governor St. Clair playfully placed his hand over her mouth and stopped her.

"I have neither blame nor praise to bestow," he said. "The less said the sooner mended. Tell me all about the attack."

Paul did as the governor requested, while the excited and angry settlers crowded around him and listened with rapt attention. When he told of the Indians firing upon him and his unarmed and helpless companions, the indignant colonists broke into hoarse growls of rage and looked about for some object upon which to work their vengeance. Silverheels stood apart from the group, his sinewy arms folded upon his chest and an impassive look upon his bronze face.

"There's one of the greasy, ugly varmints now!" shouted an enraged backwoodsman. "May be he didn't have anything to do with *this* affair, but he has with some *other*. Let's give him a lesson!"

"That's it! — Kill him! — throw him into the river!" — were the answering cries. And ere a hand could be lifted to stay their mad impulses, they threw themselves upon the Indian and attempted to bear him to the ground. The Shawnee shook them off as a dog shakes water from his shaggy coat; and, springing backward, clubbed his empty rifle and swung it around his head. Marie and Louise screamed in affright, and with the other women

beat a hasty retreat. The baffled whites made a second attempt to close, and would have succeeded had not John and Paul sprung between them and their victim.

"Stop, men!" Stacey thundered. "Would you harm him who saved us from a horrible death?"

The infuriated settlers hesitated but for a moment. Again they surged forward, their eyes glaring, their chests heaving.

"Out of the way, boys, 'r take the consequences along with the redskin!" howled the man who had incited the atttack.

Paul and his friend maintained their ground. The former looked into the faces of the angry men, and was surprised to see Isaac Meeks among the leaders! Leaping forward, Graydon thrust his fist into the hunter's face, and hissed:

"Listen, Isaac! Twice has this Indian been instrumental in saving my life; and I'll not desert him in his hour of need. The man who harms a hair of the Shawnee's head does so at the peril of his own life!"

Isaac started back, carrying the others with him. Paul was quick to take advantage of the respite, and continued rapidly:

"Wait until we are through telling you of our adventure, and you'll be heartily ashamed of yourselves. As Stacey has told you, this despised red man, unaided and alone, saved us from death."

He had gained their attention for the moment;

and he went on hurriedly, telling them of the attack and of Silverheels' successful defense. The sun had sunk behind the western hills, and the shadows of night were invading the valley. As Paul continued he could scarcely discern the faces of the men before him; but he knew, from their attitude and their exclamations, that he had won them and had nothing further to fear.

As he finished several came forward, shook hands with him and John, and apologized. Among these was Isaac. He sidled up to Graydon and in a shamefaced way began:

"I alluz was a fool, Mr. Paul —"

"An' you alluz *will* be!" Nancy commented, elbowing her way forward.

Without heeding the interruption, Isaac continued:

"Jest as you said I'd be, Mr. Paul, I'm teetotally ashamed o' myself; an' I'm a-goin' to ask that redskin's pardon, if it's the last act o' my life!"

A cheer went up from the crowd at these words. Silverheels stood like a statue of bronze, his face as immobile as before the disturbance. In answer to the humble apologies from those who a few moments before were thirsting for his blood, he said:

"The palefaces are like she wolves — they would bite the hand of him who has saved their whelps from the forest fire. I will not thrust my hand into the wolf's mouth!"

And again he folded his arms upon his chest, thus

declining to grasp the hands extended toward him.

At this moment Governor St. Clair came forward, leading Louise and Marie.

"At least, my red friend," were his words, "you will permit these young ladies to thank you for having saved their lives. It was a great and noble act; and I join them in their expression of gratitude."

The Shawnee slowly unfolded his arms and bent his head. Marie and Louise wrung his hand and in broken accents thanked him for what he had done. Paul and John, also, rested their palms in his and assured him of their everlasting friendship. The Indian's hard face softened perceptibly as he held Paul's hand and gazed into the latter's eyes, as though striving to read his inmost soul. At last he said in low, guttural accents:

"In the veins of Silverheels courses the blood of the palefaces and the red men; yet is he an Indian — an outcast — a Shawnee! He does not complain — the life he leads is to his liking. A Shawnee never forgives an injury nor does he forget a kindness. My white friend, Silverheels shall find a way to repay the debt he owes. Where the bright waters of the Bald Eagle mingle with the bright waters of the Moose Eye, stands the lodge of Silverheels. The paddle must dip many times ere he reaches it. I go."

He turned to depart, but Colonel Sproat detained him by asking:

"Won't you tell us to what tribe the Indians belong who made the attack?"

"Ugh! Delawares."

"Whence came they?"

"From their village upon the Tuscarawas."

"Did they come down the Muskingum, in their canoe?"

The Shawnee shook his head and replied:

"They are squaws! They feared to pass the lodges of the palefaces."

"They traveled overland, then?"

"Ugh!"

"How came it that you were at hand when they made their attack upon our people?"

Silverheels drew himself up until he almost equaled Sproat's magnificent height, and answered, disdainfully:

"Big Buckeye, the bald eagle comes and goes at his pleasure, and gives no man a reason for his coming or his going. The Shawnee is as proud and free as the fierce bird of prey! I go."

He sprang into his canoe — thus lending an impetus to the light vessel that carried it many feet from the shore — and entering the mouth of the tributary stream, disappeared in the darkness.

When Louise St. Clair awoke the next morning, she was aware of something that she did not know before. Her heart was revealed to her, and she knew she loved Paul Graydon. Those awful moments in the canoe had enabled her to see clearly, for at the time her fondest thoughts had been of him.

As she lay blinking at the rising sun that peeped in through her curtained window, she thought of her father's words on the day after Paul's arrival: "Another has won him!" A wave of bitter despair swept over the girl's soul, and burying her fair face in the pillows, she moaned:

"Oh! Have I learned to love him but to lose him? Marie loves him — yes; but not as *I* love him — no, no! And does he love her? No — I'll not have it so! He shall be *mine!* It isn't just that Marie should have him — he isn't of her station in life. I ought to have him — and I *will* have him! I've never tried to win him; but I'll do so now."

She arose and dressed with greater care than she had bestowed upon her toilet for many months. She was dressing for Paul — she must please him — she must fascinate him. The thought came to her that if she attempted to win his love she should be false to Marie — her sincere friend; and her face flushed.

"I can't help it if she suffers," she argued with her better self. "Shan't I suffer if he remains true to her? One of us must suffer; and must *I* be the one? No! He shall be *mine.* Love is cruel, *merciless!*"

It was in John Stacey's rather phlegmatic disposition, to accept what seemed to be inevitable, without a word of complaint or a thought of rebellion. He was content to go on worshiping at a distance the object of his adoration, without once attempting to enkindle an answering flame upon the altar. But it

was not so with Louise St. Clair. Her passionate nature burst into fire at the magic touch of love — a fire that burned away the barrier of maidenly reserve and threatened the wellsprings of womanly pride and honor. Above all, a fire that in the end would strew the cold, gray ashes of regret and shame upon her head!

That afternoon, in conversation with Marie, she asked:

"Marie, do you love Paul very dearly?"

The French girl looked at her friend in mild surprise, and answered simply and earnestly:

"A thousand times better than all else in the world."

Louise smilingly continued:

"And you fancy he loves you?"

Marie lifted her arched brows, as she replied:

"Fancy! I *know* he loves me."

"As you love him?"

"Yes."

Louise laughed a forced little laugh and went on:

"And you sincerely believe, I suppose, that he's the soul of honor and fidelity, and that he has no eyes for any woman but your own sweet self?"

A half sneer curled her lip as she said it.

Marie did not hesitate, but replied sturdily:

"Yes; I believe all that."

Louise cried, laughingly:

"Don't you know, you unsophisticated darling, that there is *no* man whose armor is invulnerable —

no man who is unsusceptible to the arts and wiles of beautiful women other than his lady love?"

"My Paul is an exception," Marie said quietly.

"You precious baby! May I prove to you that 'your Paul,' as you blindly call him, is no exception?"

"You cannot prove anything of the kind Louise."

"Well, have I your permission — may I make the attempt?"

"I care not — make the attempt."

"In any way that pleases me?"

"Yes."

"And you'll not blame me if the result be contrary to what you expect?"

"I'll not blame you."

"Very well," Louise cried gayly as she capered about the floor, "I shall have the pleasure of proving to you that Mr. Paul Graydon doesn't know his own heart, and that *you* don't know *him*. Remember, you are to offer no objection to anything I do."

"I shall offer no objections."

"Even though you see him drifting from the safe anchorage of your love — "

"None whatever!"

At this point in the conversation other members of the St. Clair family came in; and the subject was dropped. Marie had taken all that her friend had said as good-natured banter, and rather liked the prospect of putting her lover to the test. She de-

sired to show Louise that Paul was fidelity itself — and she desired to enjoy her friend's discomfiture.

During the next few weeks Louise devoted herself assiduously to the task she had in hand. She dressed to please Paul, smiled to encourage him, and gave him to understand that his presence was more than welcome. Not a day passed that she did not meet him, on one pretext or another. Paul was not wholly unconscious of her charms, and her marked attentions flattered him. He was frequently alone with her and enjoyed her keen intellect, her perfect manners and sparkling talk; and he neglected Marie to such an extent that she was compelled to spend many hours alone. However, his heart remained in the keeping of his first love; and the trustful little French girl read him aright, and patiently bided her time.

John Stacey saw the drift of affairs; and his honest soul was indignant at what he considered Paul's perfidy. He resolved to take his friend to task.

"Paul," he said bluntly, one day when the two were alone in the woods, "I'm not at all pleased with your recent treatment of Marie."

"What do you mean?" Graydon asked, in ill-feigned surprise.

"Your face tells me that you well know what I mean. You're devoting too much time and attention to Louise. Nothing but evil can come of it."

"Surely you don't believe, John, that I care any-

thing for Miss St. Clair! We are the best of friends — that's all."

"The old plea!" Stacey replied, dubiously shaking his head. "She cares entirely too much for you, at any rate. You're treading on dangerous ground. You're carelessly — I won't say willfully — leading her on. One heart must break in the end — hers or Marie's — and whosever it proves to be, you'll not be blameless."

"Do you think Louise loves me?" Paul asked with some concern.

"I'm sure she does, Paul; and you're going to break her heart. Besides, you cannot expect Marie to love and trust you always, if you persist. No woman can endure such treatment long."

Paul Graydon was shocked and grieved at his friend's words. "I've been blind!" he groaned to himself. "A fool! A knave! I see and understand all now — Louise's marked preference for me — everything! What must Marie think of me? Bah! I despise myself!"

He was silent so long that Stacey knew the leaven of his words was working. Suddenly Paul grasped his friend's hand and cried:

"John Stacey, I thank you from the bottom of my heart! How long I should have gone on playing the fool — knave — had you not come to me in your frank, brotherly way, I don't know. I enjoyed Louise's company; and I was amusing myself, with no thought of the consequences. Believe me, John,

when I say that it was thoughtlessness on my part, and not willful perversity; and believe me, too, when I promise that you shall have no occasion to chide me again."

Paul was religiously loyal to his promise. He purposely avoided meeting Louise, and conscientiously devoted himself to Marie; and, in consequence, did not see the former for several days after his conversation with Stacey. One evening, however, as he was leaving Campus Martius, he met Louise face to face. She was dressed in her green riding habit, with a jaunty velvet cap of the same color surmounting her dark hair. Her face wore an expression of silent suffering. Paul thought he had never seen her look so beautiful. He greeted her kindly and essayed to pass; but she stopped him with:

"Why are you so cold and formal, Paul?" — And her ripe lips were trembling like those of a grieved child.

Paul Graydon saw the work that he had helped to do. He paused and answered gently:

"I do not wish to appear rude, Louise; but I'm hastening to fulfill an engagement."

"I haven't seen you for a week. Can't you spare me a few moments?"

"Willingly." — And he entered the blockhouse with her.

"Where have you been all these dreary days?" she asked.

He felt that she was aiming to let him know she had missed him grievously; and he replied briefly:

"Here and there about the settlement."

"Why have you avoided me, Paul?"

"For the reason that I thought it necessary."

"Necessary!"

"Yes; Louise, I owe you an explanation. I am betrothed to Marie — I love her — and intend to marry her as soon as circumstances will permit. For me to devote so much time and attention to you is putting both you and her in an undesirable position. You and Marie are innocent; I, alone, am guilty. But the usages of society are such that, in the end, *you* must suffer most of all. Inadvertently I've done you a great injury. I humbly beg your pardon and ask your forgiveness. Do you not see that I'm right in what I've been saying?"

"Y-e-s, I — I — see," she replied, slowly and mechanically. In the dusky light of the room, her face looked wan. He resumed:

"Of course we shall remain the best of friends, Louise —"

"Of course," she interrupted, in the same impassive tone.

"Well, I must be going. Tell me that you fully and freely forgive me for my thoughtless conduct."

"I — fully — and — freely — forgive — you," she repeated mechanically.

He went out and left her to her own thoughts. For more than an hour she sat like one in a trance. When she arose the flame of her passionate love had gone out; and naught but blackness and ashes remained!

CHAPTER XVI

GAME was so scarce in the woods adjacent to the settlement that the most skillful hunters returned empty-handed. In dire extremity the people subsisted on corn-bread, early vegetables and "greens." This diet became almost unbearable; and the hunters pushed farther and farther into the forest in quest of meat. After several unsuccessful expeditions, Graydon and Stacey resolved to procure the much-needed article of food, at all hazard. Their plan was to row far up the Muskingum, hunt all day, and return to the village after nightfall. They talked it over and concluded to ask Isaac Meeks's opinion of the project.

"You can't more'n fail, anyhow," was the hunter's reply; "an' I'll go with you. Course ther's some risk right now, in goin' far from the settlements, but I guess we're able to take care of ourselves. Ther's one advantage in our goin' up the Muskingum — we can take a good look at the country up there, an' if things shape theirselves as I think they're a-goin' to, we'll be wantin' to enter lands up there 'fore the season's over."

They started the next morning at three o'clock, to avoid the disagreeable task of rowing in the July

heat. As they proceeded along the winding stream, the first faint streaks of dawn began to show, and the sylvan solitude echoed with the music of hundreds of winged songsters. Long reaches of glassy water — black-green in the dusk of dawn, but changing to silver and purple, as the sun's rays glinted its surface — glided under the prow of their boat and disappeared in the shadows formed by the overarching branches of sycamore, beech and elm. The sun climbed higher and the day grew brighter and warmer. At eight o'clock they passed the little settlement of Waterford; and two hours later they landed on a wooded bank and secreted their boat in the reeds and willows that skirted the stream.

Mile after mile they tramped through the oppressive heat of the dense forest, encountering no large animals and killing a few squirrels only. As evening approached they gave up in disgust and silently returned to their boat. Seating themselves upon the green and shady bank, they talked over their failure.

"Ther' aint nothin' to do but to go back, I 'spose," Isaac remarked in a musing tone; "an' ther' aint a very bright outlook fer the future. If you can't find game here, where 're you goin' to find it? I'm downright tired o' livin' without meat, an' I can't stand it much longer; my stomach's cleavin' to my backbone this very minute, jest from thinkin' o' what's to come. Confound the Injins! If it hadn't been fer them killin' and drivin' off the game, we'd

be livin' on the fat o' the land today. I wish the whole race of 'em was wiped out — "

" Except Silverheels," suggested Stacey, busily engaged in priming his flintlock.

" Well, he's a halfbreed," Isaac replied, triumphantly; " an' it's the white blood in him that makes him half-decent. What d'you think's a-goin' to become of us, Mr. Paul? "

" Our day's experience is somewhat discouraging," Paul admitted; " but I doubt not we shall find game somewhere. We made a mistake in stopping too near Waterford. We should have gone farther up the river. I was going to suggest that we camp here tonight, and that, on the morrow, we move up the stream — "

He broke off suddenly; and the three men leaped to their feet, gripping their guns.

" I heard a rifle shot! " Paul said decidedly. The others nodded.

A crashing sound as of some large body forcing its way through the bushes a few rods down the stream, was borne to their ears.

" It's some animal," Stacey said, in a low tone; " and it's making toward the water."

" No it ain't — here it comes! Watch out! " Isaac replied in the same intense undertone.

Graydon's rifle spoke, as a shaggy head parted the bushes and a pair of fiery eyes met his own. It was a large black bear. The ball from Paul's gun took effect in the beast's shoulder; and,

with a savage growl of rage and pain, it advanced swiftly upon the trio. Paul sprang backward to avoid the angry animal and to give his friends a chance to fire, but tripped and fell; and the bear was upon him.

"Shoot, John, shoot!" he cried, as he attempted to roll out of reach of the black mass. Stacey's and Meeks's rifles cracked simultaneously, and one of the bullets found the bear's heart. The great beast fell dead just as it had thrown itself upon the prostrate man.

Graydon's friends dragged him from beneath the carcass, and were delighted to find that, with the exception of a few scratches, he was unhurt.

"That was a purty close shave, an' nobody to blame," Isaac remarked, as he began to reload his rifle. "If it hadn't been fer that beech root you'd 'ave been all right, Mr. Paul. Good thing you wasn't alone — 'r that shot o' yours 'ld 'ave cost you y'r life. You was in such a big hurry to 'ave the first chance that you shot too high. You can't kill a bear by shootin' him in the shoulder!"

"I am aware of that," Paul answered tartly as he examined his injured shoulder. "I aimed hastily and missed a vital spot." — And picking up his gun he began to reload it.

"Well, it seems that when we can't *find* game, it walks right up to us to be killed," Isaac laughed, as he threw down his loaded rifle and, whipping out his hunting knife, prepared to skin their prize.

"Hold a moment!" Stacey cried, as the hunter stooped over the carcass. "Somebody fired at this animal just before we saw it."

"That's so," Meeks said reflectively, as he dropped on his knees, knife in hand, and commenced a hasty examination of the carcass. Of a sudden he exclaimed:

"Here's his mark, as sure 's shootin'! Right in the flank; an' the bear's been goin' from him at the time. It must 'ave been a long shot. Well, I'll git this skin off in a jiffy, an' we'll load up the pirogue an' start fer home — it's sundown now."

"Yes," Paul remarked, "if we are going home tonight, let's hasten. An Indian may have fired that shot, and we may be surrounded at this moment."

His friends were startled and apprehensively glanced around. Then Isaac laughed reassuringly and said:

"Nonsense, Mr. Paul! I don't s'pose there's an Injin in twenty miles o' here. Here, Stacey, help me jerk off this skin; an' we'll soon 'ave the carcass cut up an' be ready to start."

"But who fired that shot?" Graydon persisted.

"A Shawnee!" replied a deep bass voice. And an Indian stepped into the open space and stood before them. The three men gazed upon him in speechless amazement. At last Paul found his tongue and ejaculated:

"Silverheels!"

"Ugh!" was the guttural response; and the red hunter seated himself upon the ground.

"The Shawnee," Paul continued, indulging in the Indian's peculiar idiom, "like a dusky spirit, flits here and there. His footfalls give forth no sound, and his body casts no shadow. His white friends were not aware of his presence until he spoke. Will he not tell them of himself?"

"Is it not enough," Silverheels replied with quiet dignity, "that, when the white hunters were returning empty handed to their people, the Shawnee drove a bear toward them, that they might feast on the morrow?"

"How did you know we were here — and above all, how did you know that our hunt had proven unfruitful?" Graydon asked in unfeigned surprise.

"My white friends traversed many weary miles in quest of game and found nothing. Then they returned to their boat, disheartened. At no time was the Shawnee far from them."

"Say!" Isaac cried suddenly, "Can't you guide us to a place where there's game to be found?"

The Indian remained as stolidly impassive as a graven image. He was silently expressing his dislike for the old hunter. Stacey and Graydon saw and understood this; and slyly smiled at each other. Then Stacey addressed Silverheels:

"You've been our friend in the past; you are our friend today. Our women and children cry for

meat. Will you not show us where it may be found?"

Not a word from the graven image!

"Silverheels," Paul asked sharply, "are you my friend?"

The bronze head nodded slightly.

"For my sake — and for the sake of those I hold dear — won't you help us to procure meat for our hungry people?"

The three whites anxiously awaited the red man's reply. For fully a minute he maintained a rigid silence. Evidently he was pondering over the deadly wrongs that had been heaped upon his race and himself. The savage blood in him called loudly for revenge. True, he had befriended the whites; but it was one thing to save their lives by fighting in their defense — especially when that defense gave him an opportunity to wreak revenge upon his enemies, the Delawares — and quite another thing to serve them in the capacity of guide. His proud spirit revolted — but he loved Paul Graydon with all the strength of his fierce nature. Why, he did not know — but he loved him. His great love for the young Englishman overcame his great hatred for the white race, quenched his temporary thirst for revenge, and swept aside his baser instincts. He was conquered. Rising to his feet he said quietly — almost sadly:

"Silverheels will do what his white brother desires. The palefaces want meat — meat they shall

have. The Shawnee will be their dog and lead them to the game!"

This last sentence he uttered with bowed head and dejected mien. Then, turning to Paul and speaking in the first person, he continued:

"Here is my hand. I pledge you my lasting friendship. Henceforth you are my brother, and I shall call you White Eagle. Your friends shall be my friends, through all the seasons that come and go. I know a place where feeds a herd of deer that have never seen a white man's face nor heard the crack of his rifle. Come with me to my lodge on the Bald Eagle; and tomorrow I will load your boat with meat."

He stepped in front of John and Isaac, saying:

"You are White Eagle's friends, therefore you are my friends."

He shook their extended hands, and again turning to Paul, concluded:

"My brother, let us be moving. The sun has hid his face behind the hills; and the lodge of the Shawnee is many canoe-lengths up the Moose Eye. Come."

"Let's take some o' this bear meat with us," Isaac suggested; "it's a shame to waste it — an' we'll be wantin' it fer supper."

He and Stacey removed the skin from the dead animal and cut off the most desirable parts of the carcass. They could not take the entire body, for

it would spoil before they returned to the settlement.

It was two hours after sunset when they reached Silverheels' lodge upon the western bank of the Muskingum, a few yards above the mouth of Bald Eagle Creek. At the present time, the thriving village of Stockport is situated just below the mouth of the creek, and the iron horse thunders over the identical spot where stood the habitation of the red hunter. The rude hut of poles was completely hidden by trees and bushes that surrounded it. As it was not visible from the river, its owner had little fear of an attack from predatory bands of Delawares or Wyandots, who at times descended the stream. The Muskingum, at this point, broke into a series of gentle rapids or ripples; and to this day the place is called — "Silverheels' Riffle." After a hearty supper of broiled bear steak, the hunters lay down to sleep. Some time during the night, it rained; and when they awoke the air was clear and cool. At sunrise, they shouldered their guns and proceeded up the creek valley for nearly a mile, when they came to a smaller depression between the hills, leading off to the west. A half mile up the narrow dale, they encountered the herd, quietly feeding upon the tender herbage. They stalked the beautiful animals, and, at the first fire, succeeded in killing two bucks and a doe. The herd started, but Silverheels dropped another fine buck before they were out of range. The hunters already had as much as their pirogue could

carry and, after several hours of arduous toil, the four men bearing their trophies, again found themselves at the mouth of Bald Eagle Creek. Here they ate their midday meal; and at three o'clock began their homeward voyage.

Each of the whites thanked Silverheels for the invaluable service he had rendered, and, taking their places in the pirogue, they bade him farewell and pulled away down the river. The Indian shaded his eyes from the rays of the declining sun and watched the boat until it had turned the bend of the river. Then, as though impelled by some irresistible power, he sprang into his canoe and paddled swiftly in pursuit of his white friends.

Isaac was the first to notice the Shawnee's approach.

"By Jeems Rivers!" he exclaimed, lifting his oars from the water and resting his arms upon them. "There comes that Injin a-paddlin' after us. If he don't beat all creation, then my name ain't Isaac Meeks!"

Silverheels easily overtook them. He offered no word in explanation of his conduct; and the colonists asked for none. When he was two miles below the mouth of Bald Eagle Creek, he ceased paddling and waited for the others to overtake him. Then it was that he spoke for the first time.

"If my white friends want homes, why do they not build their lodges here?" — And he pointed to the wooded bank upon their left.

"Is it a good place?" Paul inquired, somewhat amused at the red man's question, yet pleased at his interest in their affairs.

"Ugh!" was the guttural rejoinder.

"I see the timber grows mighty thick an' heavy on the bottom there," Meeks commented; "an' that shows a rich soil. I wouldn't wonder it was a first-rate place fer a settlement."

"Paul, ask your red brother the extent of this level bottom-land," Stacey requested.

Graydon put the question to Silverheels and received in reply: "Very wide — very long — very big trees."

They resumed their journey, talking over the Shawnee's suggestion. At dusk they reached the settlement of Waterford. As they were passing the twinkling lights upon the bank, a voice from the shadows hailed them, with:

"Hello! John Stacey, is that you and your party?"

"Yes," Stacey hallooed in return.

"Well, you've made your folks uneasy by your absence over night. A boatload of men was up here looking for you this afternoon. They left for home about an hour ago. You'll probably overtake them, for they'll go slow, hoping to see or hear something of you. Good-night!"

Two hours after passing Waterford our friends came up with the party.

CHAPTER XVIII

It was the morning after the return of the hunting expedition — and it was the morning of the Fourth of July. The sky was cloudless; and the heat, excessive. Not a breath of air rippled the face of the shimmering water. The corn blades were half wilted and the leaves of the forest trees hung pendulous and lifeless. Heat waves danced upward from the clearings. All nature seemed in a comatose state — with man the only disturbing element.

It was a gala day at Marietta; and the inhabitants were out in holiday attire. Two other hunting parties had returned, laden with game; and the fishermen had made the most successful catch of the season. For the first time in months, the people had an abundance of food; and they purposed to celebrate the natal day of their country with feasting and rejoicing. Uneasiness over the prolonged absence of Paul and his comrades had given place to exuberant joy over their success and safe return.

By eight o'clock, the whole settlement was abroad and astir. Barking dogs and laughing children ran here, there and everywhere. Boating parties dotted the rivers. The soldiers from Fort Harmer, clad in gaudy but faded continental uniforms, stalked

about. Governor St. Clair and other dignitaries, gorgeous with lace and brass buttons, mingled with the people and nodded and smiled to one and all. Winsome maids and waddling matrons crossed and recrossed one another's paths, the bright dresses and garish ribbons of the girls contrasting with the sober-hued gowns of their elders. And the variegated dress of the men of the colony! What contrasts! Anything and everything to suit the purse and taste of the wearer! Nut-brown linsey-woolsey, yellow tow-linen, fringed and ornamented buckskin! Cocked hats and coonskin caps! Cowhide boots and beaded moccasins!

At ten o'clock services of semi-religious character were held under a canopy of green boughs, erected upon the bank of the Muskingum. Rev. Daniel Story invoked God's blessing. Governor St. Clair, General Rufus Putnam, Colonel Return Jonathan Meigs and others told of the struggles, privations and hardships through which the settlers had come, and predicted the future greatness of the Northwest Territory. These speeches were received with vociferous enthusiasm — enthusiasm that, as one speaker followed another, bordered on frenzy, for patriotism was on tap, and on tap, also, was a certain drink calculated to bring forth the plaudits of a crowd. This drink was spirituous, but not spiritual; and the brawny backwoodsmen were becoming warm inside as well as outside. Even the governor's face was rosier than its wont; and the minis-

ter's breath had the fruity smell of old peach-brandy!

At twelve, the meeting adjourned for dinner. Paul and Gumbo sat down with the family of their old friend, Isaac Meeks. Marie was spending the day with Louise, whose youngest sister was ill. Perhaps it was as well the young woman was not present. Her sensibilities might have been shocked, for Isaac — the sedate and upright Isaac — was inclined to an excessive volubility that brought down upon his devoted head Nancy's quick and vigorous condemnation. Poor man! He was not at all to blame; his glibness of tongue was due to draughts of patriotism — patriotism and peach-brandy.

Dinner over, the villagers reassembled for the games and sports that were common to the time. Chief among these were wrestling, boxing, foot-racing, shooting at a mark, jumping, and dancing. Under the branches of a spreading elm, the flying feet of the young people, keeping time to a whistled tune, played havoc with velvet grass and midsummer flowers. Uncle Sam Mitchell, an old sailor from the garrison, furnished the flute-like strains to which the lithe and nimble youngsters tripped. The old man sat upon a stump at one side, his leathern face puckered into a grimace that lent an additional zest to the enjoyable pastime, and tapped his foot and bobbed his head to the rhythm of his own music.

"Marse Paul, why doesn't you jump in dar an' show dem folks how to dance de ol' Virginny

Reel?" cried Gumbo, his face shining with animation.

"They seem to be enjoying themselves very well," Paul replied quietly, "and I don't care to make myself conspicuous."

"But dey's dancin' dem new fangled quadrillions an'—"

"You mean cotillions, Gumbo."

"Dat's w'at I said—an' I doesn't like dem. De ol' Virginny Reel's better dan any hifalutin codrill in de worl'. Doesn't you mean to dance, Marse Paul?"

"No."

"Why?"

"I wish to retain my steadiness of nerve, for the shooting match that's to come off soon," answered Graydon, a queer smile playing around his lips.

Gumbo winked knowingly and haw-hawed.

"I understands all dat—I does! You'd be out dar dancin' like de ol' Nick, if de purty little gal was heah. You can't fool dis nigger, Marse Paul! Ki yi! Dar she comes—her an' de gov'nor's gal. Now we'll see—now we'll see!"

Marie and Louise approached, and Paul stepped forward to greet them. It was the first time he and the governor's daughter had met since their conversation at the blockhouse; and he was a little embarrassed. However, he extended a hand to each and greeted them cordially. Then he asked:

"Louise, how is your sister?"

"She appears a little brighter this afternoon. We left her in care of Mrs. Tupper and came out for a breath of fresh air. Marie is very good to me, Paul; I don't know what I should do without her. My mother 's not here, you know. Let's be going, Marie; we shall have to return to the house soon."

Her manner was one of quiet dignity, betraying neither shame nor confusion. Graydon was agreeably surprised. Had she forgotten him so readily? Then she had not loved him as Stacey had thought. And Paul was glad to know his friend had been mistaken. He knew nothing of the fiery furnace through which she had gone.

He watched the two young women until, arm-in-arm, they disappeared. Then he sauntered to the field where the men were indulging in wrestling, boxing, and foot-racing. Peals of boisterous laughter greeted his ears as he drew near; and he knew instinctively that some ludicrous horse-play was in progress.

"Go in, Parson — go in, Parson! Down to it, Colonel — hurry up, Colonel! Whoopee — whoopee — hurrah! Whee-e-e!"

At the sound, Paul quickened his steps, and in a moment reached a point where he had a fair view of the field. A scene met his gaze that caused him to fling his hat in air and laugh until the tears ran down his cheeks and his throat and jaws ached. Rev. Daniel Story was running a foot-race with Colonel Meigs! The colonel was handicapped by

having a ten-year-old boy upon his back. The course was a two hundred yards dash to a goal and an immediate return.

"Here they come! Look at the parson — he's got the lead! It's the parson's race! Hurrah for Story — three cheers for the parson! Hip — hip — hurrah!"

The three cheers for the minister were given with a will, and the colonel was treated to a fine exhibition of mock scorn.

"Dat's one time de angel ob light outrun de debil ob darkness!" Gumbo shouted; and again the hilarity broke forth.

Paul noticed a tall, broad-shouldered, muscular man standing apart from the group that encircled the victor and vanquished. The stranger was dressed in a full suit of fringed and beaded buckskin; and a coonskin cap, with the tail of the animal attached, surmounted the shock of coarse red hair that fell in uncombed masses upon his shoulders. At his side hung bullet-pouch and powder-horn — the latter carved in fanciful designs — and resting across the hollow of his left arm was a fine silver-mounted rifle. His face was smooth, square-jawed and sensual; and he appeared to be about thirty-five years old.

"Who is that man?" Paul asked of John Stacey.

"What man?" was the quick reply.

Paul pointed to the red-haired stranger.

"Oh!"— And Stacey caught his breath sharply.

— "I didn't know *he* was here. That's Red Wallace."

"And who's Red Wallace, pray?"

"In telling you his name, I've told you all I know of him," John replied soberly. "He *says* he's a fur-trader among the Indians; but I doubt his word — I don't know why. In some way the report has become current here that he's an outlaw — a renegade, and that he has figured in more than one Indian massacre."

"He has an evil face, John. How often has he visited the settlement?"

"I think this is the fourth time. He stays but a few hours, and leaves in the night. No one knows whence he comes or whither he goes."

"I dislike his looks," Paul mused. "There's something about him that repels one. But yonder comes Silverheels! Where has that Shawnee been? This is a strange country, and many are the odd characters one meets. Hello! what is your Red Wallace doing now?"

The stranger had thrown down his rifle and divested himself of cap and hunting shirt. Now he spat upon his hands, and, jumping upward and cracking his heels together, bellowed:

"Maybe some o' you fellows are pretty good men, but I can throw down and drag out any man in the settlement! Don't stand there and gawk! If there's any o' you wants to be put on his back, just step out here!"

"A challenge!" laughed Paul. Stacey grinned and nodded. To right and to left of the two friends, men stood conversing in low, earnest tones, and glancing askance at Wallace. The breezy murmur of many voices swelled louder.

"For the credit of the colony, someone ought to accept that challenge," General Rufus Putnam said in a low tone. "Were I a little younger, I shouldn't hesitate to meet him myself."

Again Red Wallace cried:

"All afraid, are you? Come on — I won't more than break your bones! I didn't think I could scare you out so easily. Won't somebody try me just one fall? You've got a doctor here — he'll set your bones! Come on. I'll challenge any *two* of you pretty soon!"

"I can't stand this!" General Putnam muttered testily. "Where's Sproat? Somebody *must* wrestle that man. It'll never do to have it said he backed down every man in the colony!"

Paul turned to the general and said quietly:

"I believe, general, that I can throw him; but I expect to take part in the shooting-match, and I don't care to excite my nerves. However, I know a man who can put the defiant blackguard on his back, in less time than it takes me to tell you."

"Who — who?" inquired General Putnam, eagerly.

"Gumbo."

"The black?"

"Yes."

"Where is he?"

"He was here a moment ago."

Just then the darky came running up to Paul, his black face shining with sweat and excitement.

"Marse Paul," he cried, "I's gwine to wrassel dat rambumpsherous braggard out dar!"

"Do you think you are his match, Gumbo?" Paul asked, smiling.

"'Deed I is, Marse Paul!"

"Very well — go; but be careful that he doesn't attempt to injure you. You'll find him tricky and treacherous."

A lusty cheer went up from the settlers as Gumbo stepped forth and accepted the challenge. As it died out, Red Wallace said sneeringly:

"That's right — send out a nigger! Bah! Every white man in the settlement's afraid. Well, I don't object. Come on, nigger. How do you want to wrestle?"

"Any ways — *I* doesn't keer," replied Gumbo, grinning broadly.

"Oh, you doesn't keer, doesn't you!" Wallace mimicked. "Well, let it be catch-as-catch-can, best two out of three."

"Dat suits dis nigger fir' strate!" the black chuckled.

In those days a wrestling-match was a rough-and-tumble affair, without rules or referees. Nothing

but a sense of honor restrained the participants from doing bodily injury.

As Gumbo and Wallace faced each other and stood awaiting the drop of the hat, their physical differences became apparent. Wallace had the advantage in weight and breadth of shoulders; the black, in depth of chest and stockiness of build. Both were active, athletic men. Wallace was a full half head taller than the darky — but that fact did not redound to his advantage. The general opinion was that the two were very evenly matched.

A ring of eager men surrounded the contestants. Every voice was stilled as General Tupper advanced, hat in hand, and took a position at one side.

"One — two — three!" he shouted. The hat dropped to the ground; and like hounds loosed from the leash, the two men sprang forward. In the clinch Gumbo succeeded in getting the under hold. Around and around they whirled, each making violent efforts to fling the other off his feet. Red Wallace leaned over the stooped form of the black, locking his hands over the darky's back, and attempted to press him to earth. It could not be done. Then he loosed his hold, caught Gumbo by the shoulders, and, suddenly springing backward, sought to jerk the negro prone. He failed — and Gumbo's opportunity was at hand. Ere the white man could recover his poise and tighten his grip, the black lifted him bodily, and, throwing a leg behind him, pressed him to grass. Gumbo had won the first fall.

What a series of shouts and cheers went up from the settlers! The negro sprang to his feet, and Red Wallace quickly resumed an upright position — a scowl of malignant anger upon his ruddy face.

"I'll break every bone in your body this time, you black imp!" he howled.

The crowd jeered and mocked the angry man, and Gumbo returned laughingly:

"Dat's all right — dis nigger can take keer ob hisse'f. I's gwine to gib *you* a shakin' up dis time dat'll warm de wax in yo' ears! Is you all ready?"

"Yes!" cried Wallace with an oath.

Again the hat dropped and again they came together. The second round was shorter than the first. Gumbo had learned his antagonist's weak points, and wasted no time in getting the hold he desired. He chose a left-side underhold — with his strong right arm around Wallace's waist. The latter felt the black lifting him from his feet, and vainly struggled to break away. Little by little, Gumbo edged under his opponent, until he had him upon the hip. Wallace knew what was coming, and clawed and scratched to free himself from the darky's vise-like embrace. Quickly stooping — and at the same time loosing his hold — the black man shot the other over his head, like a stone from a catapult. Wallace fell like a log; and the second and last round was Gumbo's.

The colonists cheered more wildly than before, and flung taunts innumerable at the vanquished

braggart, who was beside himself with rage and mortification. Leaping to his feet, he dashed at the negro, with a string of expletives, bawling:

"No *nigger* shall beat me in a wrestle. It was a trick — it wasn't fair! Here! don't be leaving; I'm going to throw you, you black scoundrel, if it takes all the afternoon!"

Gumbo was not loath to give Wallace entire satisfaction; but Paul stepped forward and said authoritatively:

"You have done enough. Come."

"Who're you?" demanded Wallace, advancing threateningly.

"Paul Graydon of Virginia, at your service."

"Well, Mr. Paul Graydon, let me tell you you're interfering in what's none of your business! If I want to wrestle the nigger, I'll wrestle him in spite of you or anybody else. Do you hear me?"

"I hear," Paul replied, with unruffled composure.

"Well, what have you got to say?" cried Red Wallace.

"That Gumbo shall not wrestle with you again."

"Look here, stripling!" the other thundered. "If you don't shut your mouth and get out of here, I'll thrash you within an inch of your life."

"Indeed?"

The word was hissed through Paul's set teeth. His English pugnacity was aroused. Throwing off his coat and squarely facing the fellow, he continued:

"If nothing but a pummeling will silence your boastful tongue, a pummeling you shall have!"

Then to his friends: "Out of the way, men — give us room!"

The settlers surged backward. Their voices swelled into one mighty cheer for Graydon. Then the hush of expectancy fell upon them.

With a howl like a frenzied beast, Red Wallace jumped at the throat of his lithe but muscular adversary. He thought to bear Graydon to earth, and have him at his mercy. But he reckoned without his host. Springing lightly to one side, Paul dealt the ruffian a blow on the side of the jaw that sent him to the grass. Wallace's face was purple with baffled rage and his lips were dripping foam, as he arose and rushed on Paul again. Graydon repeated his tactics to such purpose that the bully received a blow in the neck which dropped him in a heap upon the ground. His eyelids quivered and dropped; his limbs twitched and were still. Red Wallace was unconscious.

The settlers raised Paul upon their shoulders and paraded up and down in front of the prostrate man, cheering; and, in derision, called upon him to renew the fight. But Wallace was oblivious.

Some one brought a pail of water and threw upon him. Presently he stirred uneasily, put his hand to his forehead abstractedly, and sat up. Struggling to his feet, he cast a look of malignant hate upon Paul Graydon.

"You'll pay for this!" he muttered; and slunk away.

"I admire much your courage and skill, my young friend, but I fear you have called up a jinnee that will be hard to down," said Governor St. Clair, as he laid his hand caressingly upon Paul's shoulder. "If I read that man aright, he's a scoundrel and will never rest until he's revenged."

Graydon was as unruffled as before the encounter, as he replied:

"I don't fear him. I've vanquished him once; I can do it again."

"I don't mean that he will openly attack you. That isn't his method of attack. He's more likely to employ subterfuge and treachery, to wreak his vengeance. Have a care for him."

Here Stacey plucked Paul's sleeve and said in an undertone: "When you're through talking to the governor, come down to the Point. The men are ready to begin shooting."

As the governor walked away in the direction of Campus Martius, the two friends turned their steps toward the Point. As they drew near, Gumbo came running toward them.

"Hurry up, Marse Paul an' Marse John!" he cried breathlessly. "Dey's done gone shot free 'r four times, a'ready."

"Who are the contestants?" Stacey inquired.

Gumbo rolled his eyes and pulled his kinky wool, in perplexity. He did not know the meaning of the

word, and he desired to conceal his ignorance; therefore he kept silent.

"Who are the contestants — the participants?" Stacey repeated.

"Does you mean who's doin' de *shootin'*, Marse John, w'en you says p'rtissypants?"

"Yes, who are the marksmen?"

"Oh!" — And the darky grinned more broadly than before —"some ob de sojers from Fort Harmer —"

"Are they using their smooth-bore guns?" Paul interrupted.

"Yes, Marse Paul."

"They have no chance," Graydon remarked to Stacey; "smooth-bore guns are inaccurate. The soldiers are foolish to enter a contest with the riflemen."

Then to Gumbo: "Go on — name the others."

The black spread the pudgy fingers of his left hand, and, with the index finger of his right, touched the outspread digits in turn, as he named the crackshots of the settlement. He concluded with: "An' Isaac, an' dat Silberheels."

The target was a piece of white paper six inches square and having a black center two inches in diameter. It was fastened to the smooth trunk of a sycamore one hundred yards from the marksmen.

"That's one of the soldiers," Stacey whispered to his companion.

Graydon nodded, but kept his eyes fixed upon the

target. The soldier's gun cracked and the bullet sped upon its course.

"One inch to the right of the paper!" shouted the marker.

Shouts of derisive laughter greeted the words; and, sulkily shouldering his piece, the soldier retired. Others followed, the marker announcing the result of each man's shot. A sensation was created as Isaac lowered his rifle and stepped from the line. The marker cried exultingly:

"Best shot yet! One-half inch from the center — directly underneath. Beats the Shawnee's shot by a fourth of an inch."

Ripples of applause ran through the group. It was Stacey's turn. Stepping to the line he took quick aim and fired.

"A tie!" the marker shouted, "To the left of the center."

"*Who* does he tie?" asked a voice.

"Meeks," was the laconic rejoinder.

The ripples of applause swelled to tiny waves that died out suddenly, as Paul toed the line, and, flinging his rifle to his shoulder, pulled the trigger.

"One-fourth inch over the center! Best shot yet!"

The tiny waves of applause grew to billows.

"It's the Indian's turn — the Shawnee's the last man.— Out of the way and let Silverheels shoot!"

A dozen men were shouting themselves hoarse; but the redman did not take his place.

"Are you not going to shoot?" Graydon asked him.

The savage shook his head.

"May I ask why?"

Silverheels did not deign to reply.

"Who won the other round?" Paul inquired of a man standing near.

"The Indian."

Again turning to his red brother, Graydon said in a half-provoked tone:

"I insist that you shoot — I shall feel hurt if you do not do as I request."

Without a word, Silverheels sprang to the line, and, with lightning rapidity, aimed his rifle and fired.

"Just in the edge of the black — two inches from the center! Graydon's round."

Paul felt certain Silverheels had shot at random, almost — had made a poor shot purposely. The Indian would not beat his white brother. The billows of applause rose to the height of tidal waves.

Colonel Sproat cried:

"Meeks and Stacey have tied. Let them shoot again to decide who 's the better marksman."

"We ain't a-goin' to shoot no more," Isaac answered; "we're even — an' we're satisfied. Silverheels won a round an' Mr. Paul won a round; let them shoot to see who's the best shot in the settlement. Either of 'em can beat me an' John, if they try the'r best."

This suggestion met with the approbation of all but the two men themselves. At last, however, they yielded to persuasion and prepared for the final trial.

Paul stepped up to the Shawnee and said very earnestly: "Silverheels, you are my red brother. If you beat me in this contest, I shall be pleased. I'll shoot first. Will you do your best to beat me?"

"Ugh!" — And the redman nodded vigorously.

"You'll not throw away your chance?"

A half grieved, half amused look crept over the Indian's features, as he replied: "White Eagle, you have my promise; is it not enough?"

"Yes," Paul answered, and toed the line. A new target had been substituted for the perforated one. The young man took quick but careful aim and fired. As the smoke cleared from before his face he heard the marker announce:

"Nicked the center! It may be *tied;* but it won't be *beat!*"

As though doubting the truth of the announcement, the Shawnee deliberately walked out to the mark and inspected it closely. Then, keeping his eyes fixed steadily upon it, he backed slowly toward the line.

"Well, of all things!" was the comment of Isaac.

"What's his object?" was the question uppermost in everybody's mind.

"Look at dat Silberheels!" Gumbo chuckled. "Guess de Injun debil's done gone crazy dis time.

Ki-yi! He can't done beat dat shot o' Marse Paul's, nohow."

Silverheels reached the line, threw his rifle to his shoulder, and took deliberate aim. The gun cracked. Silently the spectators awaited the marker's words.

"Missed the whole tree!" was the astounding report of that individual.

"You're mistaken — look again!" were the cries that went up on all sides.

The semblance of a smile played around the Shawnee's firm mouth. Paul dashed toward the target to investigate for himself. After a brief examination, he cried:

"He has tied me; and, in so doing, has proven himself the best marksman in the Northwest Territory. He aimed not at the mark, but at the hole made by my ball. His bullet has passed through the opening, without enlarging it. Three cheers, men — three cheers for Silverheels, the crack-shot of the two valleys!"

Three loud and prolonged cheers split the sultry atmosphere and echoed far up the distant hill-slopes. Silverheels was the favorite of the hour.

At this moment, some one raised the cry — "Emigrants, emigrants!"

"Where? where?" — were the answering shouts.

"Coming down the Ohio, on a barge! Let's help them to land!"

The crowd surged to the shore. A barge, on which were several families with their household ef-

fects and domestic animals, was quietly approaching the landing. The vessel touched the beach; and the debarkation commenced. Paul Graydon elbowed his way through the crowd, thinking he might aid the newcomers. A hand was laid upon his arm; and a familiar voice said: "Won't you bid me welcome, Cousin Paul?"

He staggered back a step, raised his eyes — and looked into those of Hester Lovelace!

CHAPTER XVIII

FOR several seconds, Paul Graydon stood silently staring at his cousin. His face showed pale through its tan, and reflected conflicting emotions. Gladness, distrust, love and dislike, were one and all mirrored there. He was glad to see her — she was his old-time playmate; but he distrusted her mission. He loved her, for the sake of the old days and the kindness she and her parents had shown him; but he disliked her presence. He pitied her because he knew that she had suffered; but he condemned her for the part she had played in her mother's underhanded scheme. As he gazed, he saw the indelible lines of suffering in her pale face. She was as beautiful as before; but the firm mouth was a little firmer, the bright eyes were a little colder. She stared at him fearlessly, and awaited his greeting. At last he found his voice; but his words were formal and ungracious.

"What are you doing here?" was his chilling but not unnatural question.

The expression of her marble features did not change.

"I came to see the only relative I have on the American continent. Is this my welcome?"

"Your only relative!" he ejaculated.

"That's what I said."

"But Aunt Caroline —"

"Is in a better land."

Paul caught his breath sharply and cried:

"Dead!"

"She is dead."

They were attracting attention. Paul took her hand and led her aside. For some minutes no word was said, as they seated themselves upon the green bank, under the spreading branches of a gnarled beech, with hands clasped. The voices from the landing came to them, as a confused murmur. For the time, both were living in the past; and the hum of voices seemed the echo of those they had known and loved in childhood. The knowledge of the death of his aunt eradicated all bitterness from Paul's heart. He forgot her heartless words and actions, and remembered only the kindness he had received at her hands. She was the only mother he had ever known.

"Tell me all about Aunt Caroline's — death!" he said slowly, at last.

"She died within two weeks after your departure," Hester replied, looking out upon the Ohio, and plucking at some dead leaves that clung to her gray cloth dress.

"Two weeks?"

"Yes — you killed her!" — Her voice trembled. She was almost in tears.

"Hester!" he cried with staring eyes. He thought her mad.

The young woman's voice hardened as she said almost fiercely:

"You did! Your leaving us killed her! At the moment of your departure, she swooned away, and she never rallied. Her last words were of you. She begged me to find you and tell you she loved you as a son to the last. She requested —" Here she faltered and grew embarrassed —"me to — to bring you back to Virginia and — and share the estate with you."

Paul had recovered his composure; and now he asked quietly:

"And you came for that purpose?"

"I did." — Her voice was as even and well modulated as his own.

"Who has charge of the plantation in your absence?"

"The overseer."

"Are the families with whom you came through from Virginia?"

"Yes; from the lower Shenandoah."

"Shall you stay with them while you're in the settlement?"

"I presume so — I know no others."

"Do you expect to remain long in the colony, Hester?"

He was beginning to feel more at ease. Perhaps she would prove tractable, after all. Surely she un-

derstood that he would not marry her. Undoubtedly she had come to fulfill a promise to her dying mother, and not with any thought that he would return with her. He was wholly unprepared for her answer:

"Until you're ready to return with me."

He started to his feet crying:

"You don't know what you say! I have no intention of returning. I've cast my lot here, and here I shall stay. All that I hold dearest on earth is here — "

She had arisen and was standing close to him. Now she interrupted him:

"What do you mean when you say all you hold dear is here?"

A haggard look had crept into her face; and a sickening dread had taken possession of her.

"I forgot — you do not know," he stammered. Then he went on hurriedly:

"You'll understand when I tell you that Isaac Meeks and family are here. Marie Fontanelle is with them. As you know, Hester, I love her dearly. After once losing her, I won't leave her; nor will I accept a part of your estate. You didn't know that they were here?"

"No — no; I did not — not know they were here," she murmured, with white lips.

She took a step backward; and her eyes fell. Her face was like marble; and she trembled visibly. All through the toilsome and dangerous journey, she

had been stimulated by the thought of again seeing Paul — her love. The hope that he would renounce his quest of Marie and return to Virginia, to become her husband had sustained her. It had not entered her mind that he was with the French girl. Was she to lose him at last, after all that she had undergone? The thought was maddening. Slowly the red blood left her heart and mantled her face. She experienced a burning, tingling sensation that ran from crown to sole.

Paul noted his cousin's look and attitude, and considered it an auspicious time to urge her return to Virginia as soon as possible. He thought, after what he had told her, she would be glad to escape to the privacy of her own home.

"Hester, I'm very sorry that you came here — "

She looked up quickly and attempted to speak, but he continued:

"I'm glad to see you, and I sympathize with you in your bereavement, but — "

"Paul," she interrupted half fiercely, "if Isaac Meeks and family are here, then you know all!"

"Yes; I know all."

She was silent a moment; then she burst forth:

"No; you *don't* know all! You don't know — you never *can* know — how madly I love you! I promised my dying mother I would find you and lay bare my heart before you. Oh! Paul, I love you as no other in the wide world *can* love you! I — "

"Hester — Hester!" was all he could say.

She saw him shrink from her. But, goaded to desperation by bitter disappointment, she poured forth a torrent of half incoherent sentences.

"I do — I do!" she cried wildly. "Why should I attempt to conceal the truth? I would do anything — be anything — to win you! Without you, life is a waste; with you, a bower of heaven! See! I throw myself at your feet and entreat you not to cast me off!"

Her voice softened — her eyes filled with tears. She dropped upon her knees and, clasping her slim, white hands, looked up at him pleadingly. Her black hair uncoiled and fell in glossy waves about her shapely shoulders. Her voice was choked with sobs as she continued:

"I have loved you long, Paul; I have followed you here — I would follow you to the ends of the earth! All I have — all I am is yours! Surely you cannot be so cruel as to say me nay, when I forget my pride and womanhood, and, on bended knees, beseech you to give me the right to be with you always! Paul — Paul — don't look at me so! You will drive me mad!"

Without a word, he stooped to raise her; but she motioned him away and panted:

"No — no! Not until you have promised — not until — "

"Hester Lovelace!" he cried sternly. "Have you lost all reason? Get up — I command you!"

"Promise me — promise me!" came in a whisper from her dry lips.

Paul's nerves were at the highest tension, and his eyes were stern as he said slowly:

"*I — can — not!*"

Hester sprang to her feet — a tigress at bay. Coming close to him, she hissed:

"You — *will* — not!"

"Have it so," he answered quietly.

Her features worked and froth gathered at the corners of her mouth, as, with disheveled hair, she stamped her foot in impotent rage.

"Fool!" she foamed. "You've changed my love to bitterest hate! Henceforth I live for revenge! Take your baby-faced backwoods wench — but I will never forgive you — never! I shall follow you as the soft-footed lioness follows her prey — I shall be your Nemesis! You shall suffer as you have made me suffer! Though you go to the remotest corner of the globe, I'll follow you and torment you. I wish you a long life of misery — may you know neither peace nor plenty! And here — where you have spurned me, I call down upon your head the curses of the most high God!"

She turned quickly and left him. Like one in a dream, he followed and saw her rejoin her companions. Then, with bowed head, he turned toward Campus Martius.

It was dusk. The people were at supper or attending to their evening chores. Neither Isaac nor

Gumbo had seen Hester. None knew of her arrival except Paul. As he pursued his way, he was startled by the boom of a cannon at Fort Harmer. He paused and listened. In a moment the gruff bark of another broke the stillness of evening, and sent its hoarse echoes rolling up and down the valleys. Another and another followed, until thirteen brazen throats had thundered forth the message that the "thirteen united colonies were, and of a right ought to be, free and independent states."

He strode onward in the gathering shadows, so preoccupied that he did not notice a man rapidly coming toward him from the blockhouse, until they were close together.

"W'y, is dat you, Marse Paul?" cried Gumbo's well-known voice.

"Yes. Where away, Gumbo?"

"I's gwine down fo' dat Doctor True; Marse Clair's little gal's dyin', dey tinks. In free 'r four minutes I'll be back to git supper, Marse Paul."

"Too bad — too bad!" Paul muttered to himself, as he resumed his way. Evidently he had in mind the critical illness of the governor's little child, and not the fact that his black servitor had promised to prepare supper.

On reaching his quarters, the young man threw himself upon a rude couch of skins and gave himself up to thought. He was very sorry; yet what else could he have done? He knew Hester would attempt to carry out her threat and hound him to

death, if necessary, to glut her revenge. He had no fear, however, for his own safety. His cousin had wished him a long life of misery. Evidently she did not intend to do him physical injury. What then? She had vowed to have revenge — what course would she pursue? Marie! He sprang erect at the thought. Yes, Hester would attempt to injure Marie!

"She will rest neither night nor day until she has had revenge," he mused gloomily. "I must guard Marie closely. There's no knowing what a desperate woman may attempt. Hester will not be turned aside from her purpose. It's terrible to think of having a merciless enemy on one's trail through all the years that are to come. Until she's dead there'll be no rest for me or mine — I know her too well!"

Gumbo returned and talked glibly of the day, as he prepared the evening meal. Paul had little to say. The quick-witted black saw that something was amiss; but he did not betray his knowledge by word or look. He knew in the end Paul would confide in him, and the sable-skinned fellow patiently awaited the other's pleasure.

Supper over, Graydon sauntered out-of-doors, for a breath of cool air; for the heat indoors was stifling. As he reached the middle of the courtyard, a young woman ran up to him and, with a cry of — "Oh, my Paul!" — threw her arms around him. It was Marie; and she was trembling with excitement.

"What is it, dear?" Paul inquired, as he held her from him and peered into her upturned face. In the darkness that walled them in he could not see her features distinctly, but he felt the heaving of her chest as his hands rested upon her shoulders.

"I'm so — so surprised, so frightened!" she panted.

"Tell me all about it," he said gently, as he led her toward the door of the blockhouse.

They seated themselves upon the sill, and Marie began:

"I went down to Colonel Sproat's to get some blackberry wine for the sick child —"

"Is she very ill?" he interrupted.

"Very ill — I don't think she will last until morning. The doctor says she will go with the turn of the night. Poor Louise! She's almost prostrated. But, as I was saying, I went to Colonel's Sproat's for wine. Coming back, I met someone in the narrow path. It was a woman. I could distinguish her form, but not her features. I stepped to one side and, as I did so, wished her good evening. She paused abruptly, and — oh, Paul! she caught me by the arm, and shaking me, hissed in my ear: 'You've won him with your milk-and-water beauty! Make the most of your conquest while you may; you shall not live long to enjoy your triumph over me!" And, Paul — my Paul, it was your cousin, Hester Lovelace!"

Marie hid her face and shuddered. He tenderly

caressed her, as he replied with an assurance he did not feel:

"Yes — yes; I know Hester is here. I've seen her and talked to her. She came to bear me a message from her mother, who died shortly after my departure. True, she is very angry that I won't go back with her — "

"And marry her?" Marie asked without raising her head.

"Yes, and marry her. But her anger is impotent. We'll shun her on all occasions, and thus rob her of all chance to do or say aught to harm us. I doubt not that she would gladly separate us; but that she cannot do. No, dear one, you've no cause for alarm. My cousin will weary of the privations and hardships of the settlement soon, and return."

She raised her gold-crowned head:

"You are so wise and good, Paul," she murmured; "you know so well how to soothe and comfort me." Then with a little shudder: "Yet I never can rest easy until your cousin has left us to ourselves. I fear she'll plot evil against us. But I must return to poor Louise. I pity her so — death is an awful thing! And Louise is both mother and sister to the sick child. Good night."

He held her for a moment, while he asked:

"Did you see where Hester went when she left you?"

"She followed me a short distance, then turned off toward the bank of the river."

Marie flitted away toward the quarters of Governor St. Clair, while Paul sat in the doorway where she had left him, pondering deeply. It was evident to him that his cousin was almost mad with rage and disappointment; and he was greatly concerned. Could he have seen her at that moment, he would have been dumb with surprise and horror.

When Hester Lovelace abandoned the pursuit of Marie, she made her way, sullen and reckless, to the bank of the Muskingum, and, like a caged tigress, paced up and down, biting her pale lips and muttering to herself. For the time she was irresponsible. Over and over the one word — "revenge" — throbbed through her brain. With every heart-beat she seemed to feel — "revenge! revenge!" She had eaten no supper, and was weak from fasting and fatigue; but she did not realize it.

"I believe I'm going mad!" she cried at last, stopping suddenly and pressing her palms to her throbbing temples. "Oh, Paul Graydon! I shall be ready and anxious to die, when I've made you suffer as I do this night!"

The moon was rising. A shadowy figure moved forward and found a hiding place behind a huge tree trunk; but Hester did not see it.

"Hates Paul Graydon and wants to make him suffer, eh?" a voice said in a whisper as faint as the breath of the evening breeze.

The moon suddenly sprang above the low-lying

cloud bank on the horizon; and quickly the shadow resolved itself into the form of Red Wallace.

"Who can she be?" he asked as he watched the lithe figure pacing up and down, in the moonlight. "I believe I'll speak to her."

He stepped from behind the tree trunk, into the full light of the moon. Hester did not appear to be aware of his presence, although he stood directly in her path. Not until he spoke did she give him the slightest notice.

"Hello, my pretty jade!" he cried with bold familiarity. "You're out walking late. Don't you want some one to keep you company?"

"Sir!" she cried, starting back in alarm.

"Hoity-toity!" he laughed. "I'm not going to eat you up. Don't be scared at my rough way of speaking — I'm as gentle as a cooing dove. I find you in trouble; perhaps I can help you, if you'll tell me all about it."

"Sir!" And Hester made a move to turn and leave him. "I'm not desirous of your company; and I'm not in the habit of confiding my troubles to strangers."

Again Red Wallace laughed; this time sneeringly.

"Not in the habit of confiding to strangers, eh!" he said. "Well, you were sowing your secrets broadcast just now. The passing wind may carry them to other ears — Mr. Paul Graydon's, for instance."

"They can tell him no more than I've already told him," she replied, in a hard, cold voice.

"Look here, my young woman!" Wallace said, coming close to her and laying his hand upon her arm. "I've good reason to hate this young man, Graydon; so've you. Tell me what you want done, and I'll do it. What do you say?"

She shook off his arm, but did not leave him. Instead, she turned upon him with flashing eyes, crying:

"If you'll do what I want done, you shall be well paid. Now!"

"Sh!" he whispered warningly, placing his finger upon his lips and glancing apprehensively around. "Not so loud; there may be listeners. What do you want done?"

"I want — but how do I know you'll do it? How do I know you won't report to the authorities what I say?"

"Let's understand each other," Wallace answered with an evil smile that Hester did not see. "My name is Wallace — Red Wallace they call me. Paul Graydon gave me a drubbing; I hate him. What's your name?"

"Hester Lovelace."

"Do you live here?"

"I'm staying here."

"I understand — and Graydon?"

"Is my cousin.

"And has jilted you —"

"Sir!"

It was an open insult. There had been times when she would have left him — but now her nobler instincts were subjugated to her overmastering desire for revenge. The one word was her only protest.

"Don't get on your high horse!" Wallace returned. He knew he was gaining the ascendency, and he chuckled inwardly.

"Go on, now — tell me what you want done; and I'll strike a bargain with you. Do you want him killed?"

"No, not that! I want him to suffer."

"How?"

"As I have suffered — as I suffer now."

"Then there's somebody else you want removed?"

"Yes — yes!" Hester replied, eagerly.

"Who — what's her name?"

He was reading her mind, apparently, as one reads a printed page.

"Marie Fontanelle," was the reply.

She knew that she ought not to answer his questions; and she wondered at her folly. Yet she felt that she must obey him. What eerie power was he exercising over her? Like one in a dream she heard him saying:

"I don't know her."

"She is Isaac Meeks' niece," she answered, mechanically.

"Ah! And you want her removed?"

"Yes."

"That you may have him to yourself?"

"That I may see him writhe in anguish!"

"But you love Paul Graydon?"

"My love has changed to hate."

"W-e-ll," he said, slowly, "I'll think over the matter. I think it can be done — but it's a risky piece of work. Listen! You're to meet me at this spot one week from tonight. Do you understand?"

"Yes."

"Very well. Go to your home at once."

Without a word, she did as he directed. He watched her receding form and listened to her soft footfalls until she was lost to sight and hearing. Then he strode up the river, muttering to himself:

"Rich and beautiful — and in my power! Old George Lovelace's daughter, I'll bet a pound of powder! What changes time does bring! Listening to her well-modulated tones, enjoying her refined presence, I could imagine myself back among the fair maids and stately dames of old Virginia. Pshaw! I'm a fool! What has an outlaw, a renegade, to do with such things? I wonder if her father's still living; I've an old score to settle with him!" — A fierce scowl darkened his sensual face. — "Some member of the family shall pay the debt — as well the daughter as anyone. All things come to him who waits!"

As he disappeared among the shadows cast by the giant trees, another figure emerged from the willows along the shore, and followed him. It was the Shawnee.

CHAPTER XIX.

IN THE gray of the morning, Paul and Gumbo were awakened by a knock at their door. As Gumbo opened it, Silverheels, unbidden, stepped over the threshold and seated himself on a stool by the fireless hearth.

Paul leaped from his couch and, hurriedly throwing on his clothes, sought the Indian's side, saying:

"I can tell from the look upon my red brother's face, that he brings news."

"Ugh!"—the Shawnee grunted; but he kept his eye upon Gumbo, and was silent.

"Gumbo, you may go and feed the horses," said Paul. "I'll kindle the fire for breakfast."

The obedient black took up his hat and left the room. For fully a minute the Indian kept a moody silence. It seemed an age to Paul, who felt his companion had something of grave importance to communicate. Pointing to his torn and soiled moccasins and dew-wet leggins, Silverheels began:

"Since the rising of the moon, I have traveled far on the trail of the Red Fox. Now I am here."

"The Red Fox?" Paul queried.

"Yes, the Red Fox that sought to cripple the wings of White Eagle."

"You mean Red Wallace?"

"Ugh! He has left the lodges of the palefaces and gone to his den in the woods."

"Why did you follow him?"

"To find his den."

"Did you succeed?"

The Indian nodded his head in the affirmative.

"Where is it?"

"Far up the Moose Eye, in the rocks."

"Then he does not live among the Delawares."

"The Red Fox may have more than one den," Silverheels replied. "He comes and goes — he is very cunning — he is hard to trail."

"I'm glad he has left the settlement, at any rate," Paul said musingly.

Hester's wild threats had made her cousin nervous, and apprehensive for the safety of Marie.

"Ere he left the village of the white men," Silverheels resumed, "Red Fox talked long with the tall young woman that yesterday shook the hand of White Eagle."

Paul sprung to his feet, surprise and incredulity upon his countenance.

"With whom did he talk?" he cried.

"With the tall young woman that has hair as black as the crow's wing."

"Hester!" the young man ejaculated.

"Ugh! She is a she wolf — she snarls and bites."

"It cannot be — you must be mistaken!"

The Shawnee shook his head.

"Where did you see them?"

Silverheels jerked his thumb in the direction of the Muskingum, but maintained a stolid silence.

"When was it?"

"Last night — when the moon shone big and round above the treetops."

"When the moon was rising?"

"Ugh!"

"Of what did they talk?" And Paul anxiously awaited the reply.

"Of White Eagle and the blue-eyed maiden."

The young Englishman drew his breath spasmodically—"And what did they say?"

The Indian arose, as he answered: "Silverheels can hear the steps of the fur-footed hare, but he cannot hear the sounds of moonbeams striking the earth. The voices of Red Fox and She Wolf were softer than the whisper of rippling waters. Silverheels could not hear all that they said. But they plotted harm to the blue-eyed maiden. Let White Eagle open wide his eyes and ears — let him beware."

He shouldered his rifle and started toward the door; but Paul arrested his progress by asking:

"Where now?"

"The woods and streams await my coming," was the reply; "I go."

He crossed the threshold, passed through the western gate of the fortress, and was gone. When

Gumbo came in from the stables, Paul was standing where the Shawnee had left him.

"Marse Clair's little gal's dead," said the darky, as he knelt and began to build a fire.

"I am not surprised," Graydon returned, as he dropped upon a stool.

He did not change his position, but sat gazing out of the open door while Gumbo busied himself with their morning meal.

"Breakfas' is ready, Marse Paul," Gumbo said, after the lapse of a half hour.

Graydon did not stir.

The negro shook his head, muttering under his breath:

"Wish dat Injin debil 'ld aggregate hisse'f clean outen dis curriculum, an' stay out — I does; kase eb'ry time he comes dar's no end ob trouble. Marse Paul wa'n't feelin' berry well, nohow; an' sence dat Shawnee's come insinuatin' 'round dis mornin', he's done los' all interes' an' principal in co'n pone an' venison." Then in a louder tone: "Marse Paul, doesn't you want to partook ob yo' breakfas'?"

"What did you say?" Paul asked, as he faced his black friend.

"Breakfas' 's ready."

Paul arose and joined Gumbo at the table. Scarcely were they seated when Gumbo began:

"Marse Paul, dar's somefin' discommodin' de life outen you — dar is. Ain't you gwine to tell ol' Gumbo w'at it am?"

"I am greatly worried — that's true," Paul replied. "Hester, my cousin, is here — "

"W'at's dat?" cried the negro.

"Hester is here."

"Gumbo rolled his eyes until nothing but the whites were visible, and said with great solemnity:

"Am dat so! Den dar's mischief brewin', sure 'nough. W'en did she come?"

"Yesterday."

"W'at's she gallivantin' roun' de settlement fo' ?"

"She wants me to return to Virginia with her. Aunt Caroline is dead — "

"Is de ol' missus dead?"

"Yes — and Hester wishes me to return to Virginia, and share the estate with her."

"Is you gwine, Marse Paul?"

"No."

"Did you tell Miss Hester dat?"

"Yes; and she is very angry."

"She come clar out to dis wild an' solitudinous country to git you?"

"Yes."

"Marse Paul, she wants you to marry 'er."

Paul nodded.

"Did she p'opose to you?"

"You might call it that — yes."

"Den, Marse Paul, de debil's to pay — an' Injin debil at dat! Miss Hester's jes like de ol' missus — w'ateber she sets 'er head an' heart on, dat she's

gwine to hab. You's 'nsulted 'er, Marse Paul, by 'fusin' to marry 'er; an' she'll neber fo'gib you. She'll foller you to de ends ob de worl' to to'ment you. You got to watch 'er, Marse Paul — you got to watch 'er; 'deed an' dat's a fack!"

Gumbo realized as fully as did Paul the vindictiveness of which Hester was capable. He gravely shook his head, as he reached for another piece of steaming corn pone, and continued:

"She'll be up to some debilment in less dan two days — can't fool dis nigger! He knowed de ol' missus an' he knows de young missus. 'Spect she'll try to hurt 'r skeer de little gal jes to worry you, Marse Paul. I'd be right down discriminatin' glad if she'd shake de dust ob de settlement off'n 'er shoes fo' good — I would, Marse Paul."

"She has begun already," Paul answered, as he pushed back his stool. "And whom do you think she has chosen for an accomplice?"

"Hasn't de least idee, Marse Paul."

"Red Wallace."

"W'at!"

"It's true."— And Paul told what Silverheels had seen and heard.

The negro had not finished his breakfast; but now his appetite failed him. He sat in silence for some moments. At last he said:

"Dar isn't no use talkin', dar's gwine to be trouble an' lots ob it. W'en a woman stoops to de lebel ob a white Injin — den watch out! She's des-

per't — dat's wa't — she's desper't; an' dar ain't nuffin' she won't try to do to git vengeance."

Then his face lighted up.

"Marse Paul, didnt' you say somefin' one day 'bout movin' up de 'Skingum — you an' Isaac an' some mo' people?"

"I spoke of entering land up there and founding a settlement. Why do you ask?"

"Den de sooner you does it de better. Git de little gal 'way from here — maybe Miss Hester wouldn't foller you. 'Spect she gib up an' go back to ol' Virginny. You can fight Injins an' bars, Marse Paul, but you can't fight a mad woman nohow — you jes got to run off an' leabe 'er."

"You may be right, Gumbo," Paul answered. "I'll see Meeks and the others at once. If we're going, we should go soon. In the meantime, I want you to aid me in guarding Marie."

"All right, Marse Paul!" the darky returned right cheerfully. "Dis nigger 'll do his lebel bes' to keep de purty little gal all safe an' soun' — you can done count on ol' Gumbo."

Paul went at once to Isaac Meeks' cabin. He found that worthy seated on his doorstep, smoking his corncob pipe in evident contentment, and tenderly caressing the pendulous ears of a lank hound pup that rested its head upon his knee. Graydon apprised his hunter friend of Hester's presence, and told him of Gumbo's suggestion in regard to the new settlement. Nancy, overhearing Paul, came

and listened to all that was said. When the young man had finished, Isaac remarked:

"Guess the nigger's 'bout right; we ought to have the settlement well started 'fore winter sets in, anyhow. We can enter land at any time now; an' there' ain't no need o' waitin'. What do you think o' that big bottom the Shawnee p'inted out, Mister Paul?"

"The very place I had in mind; and we'll call our colony —'Big Bottom.'"

"Well, le's hunt up John Stacey an' young Putnam an' the Choate boys, an' start the ball a-rollin' to once. It'll take us several weeks to gether up things an' git ready to go. Le's mosey down to Colonel Stacey's, an' see if John's to home."

As they arose to go, Nancy — who until that moment had preserved an unwonted silence — said:

"Git things ready as soon as you can; an' le's clear out o' here. Course it looks kind o' little to run away from an enemy — an' that enemy a woman; but I s'pose there's nothin' else to do. She couldn't harm anybody, likely; but she'll keep us all in hot water as long as we're in the same neighborhood. Confound 'er! I wish she'd staid to home an' not come traipsin' out here. Anyhow, I'm anxious to git a piece o' land we can call our own. If she comes pesterin' 'round Big Bottom — as Mr. Paul calls it — she'll find *me* into 'er wool. She won't do nothin' o' the kind, though; 'cause ther' won't be no place fer 'er to stay. We'll be well red

of 'er — an' glad of it. She'll git discouraged an' go back to Virginny."

"I hope so," was all the reply Paul made, as he and Isaac moved away.

The two men sought the other members of the association. All were made to understand the necessity of haste, if they were to be well established in their new home, ere the advent of cold weather. Each man promised to do everything that lay in his power to further the preparations for departure. It was with a much lighter heart that Paul left the others, and accompanied by John Stacey, walked down to the Ohio shore to look at a barge the company purposed to buy of Commodore Whipple.

As the two young men descended the gentle slope to the water's edge, a disgusting sight met their gaze. A party of men — among whom were a number of soldiers from Fort Harmer — acting on the theory that "the hair of the dog cures the bite," were dissipating the effect of the previous day's potations, by indulging in another carouse. With hoarse shouts and ribald jests, they staggered around a prostrate man; and, thrusting their flasks under his nose, attempted to make him drink. The man upon the ground was Silverheels!

When Graydon and Stacey made the discovery that it was their red friend, they rushed upon the tipsy rowdies and flung them right and left. Bending down, they cut the thongs that bound the Indian's limbs, and assisted him to his feet. He was

bleeding freely from a wound upon the temple; and his lips were bruised and swollen from the impact of the flasks that had been jammed against them. His handsome features were drawn into a scowl of rage; and his eyes had in them the frenzy of a goaded beast. He spoke no word, as he folded his arms upon his broad chest and faced his tormentors; but his silence spoke volumes more than any outburst of passion could have expressed.

"What's the meaning of this outrage?" Graydon thundered, his voice choked with passion.

The hangdog inebriates — leering and chuckling in maudlin fashion — commenced a hasty and confused retreat; but Stacey springing in front of them cried authoritatively:

"Stop — every one of you! If you don't give a satisfactory explanation of this shameful affair, I'll report it to Governor St. Clair and General Putnam."

Awed and half-sobered by the young settler's threat, the men halted in indecision. One of their number, a middle-aged soldier from the fort, humbly doffed his hat and said:

"We didn't mean any harm (hic), Mis'r Stacey Graydon — 'r Graydon Stacey. The Injin refused to drink with us — that's all. Course we (hic) couldn't stand that. So when he went to get into his canoe we — we j-jumped on to him, and tried to make him dr-drink. He showed fight so we had to (hic) throw him down and tie him. He fought like

a wildcat — Look at this eye! And see Fletcher's nose! Doc True 'll have to straighten it up, 'r-'r (hic) Fletcher won't ever be fit to call on the ladies. But we were too many fer the redskin, Mis'r Stady Grayson — and we tied him — and tried to make him drink; but he sp-spit the good liquor out and — and (hic) that's all there was of it. 'Spect old Copperheels 'll never forgive us. His gun's in the bottom of his canoe — he'd just laid it (hic) in there when we — we j-jumped onto him."

Paul approached the rowdies and said fiercely:

"For shame! And you call yourselves civilized beings! Begone — each man to his quarters! And consider yourselves lucky if this doesn't come to the ears of the governor. Go! Sleep off your drunken debauch and resolve to be men; today you are brutes!"

The men, with many backward glances and imprecations, staggered up the slope and disappeared. When the last one was out of sight, Paul turned to Silverheels, and, taking his hand, said brokenly:

"My red brother, I have not words to express my regret and sorrow at the wanton insult you have received. This is the second time you have been made to feel that there are those in the colony, who have forgotten the true meaning of gratitude and respect. Nothing that I can say will change the case. You have been overcome by brute force and numbers, and subjected to humiliating abuse. I blush for my people — but I can

offer no excuse for their conduct; all that I can do is to again assure you that you have my sincerest friendship — as, also, you have that of many others in the settlement. Stacey and I will stand by you to the death."

"Yes, indeed!" Stacey replied earnestly. "We are your friends in the fullest meaning of the sacred word."

Silverheels passed his free hand over his bruised lips, and muttered in hoarse accents:

"The Shawnee knows his friend — and he knows his enemy. The one he loves — the other he hates! Many times he has befriended the whites. Today he has received his reward. He will not forget! The pack of howling wolves may overcome the buffalo when he is off his guard. But when he rises he flings them off and tramples them to death, one by one. The Shawnee will not forget! His face is stained with blood. It shall be washed away in the blood of his enemies. His lips are bruised; the lips of his foes shall be silenced forever. The Shawnee will not forget!"

John and Paul looked at each other in painful silence. Each fully understood the Indian's meaning. Both realized that the act of the drunken rowdies had changed the red hunter's secret friendship for the colonists, to open enmity.

As though communing with himself, Silverheels continued:

"Many, many moons ago, the Shawnee dwelt

among the palefaces. He said to himself: 'The white blood in my veins will make of me a white man. I will learn their ways — I will wear their dress — I will be one of them.' He learned their ways, he wore their dress — but he was *not* one of them. He spoke their tongue, he read in their books, he wrote his name; but he was not a white man. They scorned and despised him. He loved a paleface maiden; she laughed at him and told him to go to the lodges of the Shawnees for a wife. In his disappointment he drank of the fiery rum the palefaces held to his lips. He drank until his eyes were dim and his hand was unsteady; until his steps were uncertain and his aim was untrue. His head ached and his limbs trembled. He said, 'I will drink no more;' but 'more — more'— was the echo that rang in his ears. He left the villages of the palefaces — but he could not return to the redmen. He was an outcast — but he was a Shawnee. For years he has lived alone. The sun is his father, the moon is his mother; the trees and rocks are his brothers and sisters. Today the palefaces again tempted him to drink rum — but he would not. They bore him to the earth and held the fire-water to his lips; its fragrant breath was sweet in his nostrils — but he did not drink. They bound him with thongs and kicked him. The Shawnee will not forget!"

Then taking Stacey's hand and retaining his grasp

upon Paul's, he looked at the two young men for a few moments and resumed:

"White Eagle, Silverheels has learned to love you and your friend. He thought to visit the village of the palefaces often, that he might be near you. But the God of the white men wills it otherwise; he has turned his back upon the Shawnee. Silverheels will return to his lonely lodge. No more will he enter the village of his enemies. He will live for revenge; the palefaces shall feel the strength of his strong right arm. Farewell!"

"Surely," Graydon cried in surprise, "you will not harm those that have been kind to you?"

"The Shawnee knows his friends — he will not mistake them for enemies!"

Without another word, he sprang into his canoe and paddled away.

CHAPTER XX

THE following day, Governor St. Clair's little daughter was laid to rest in the clearing containing the large mound of the mound-builders. This plot of ground is today known as the Mound Cemetery, and contains the graves of many pioneers. At this time Governor St. Clair's wife and son were at the old home in Pennsylvania. He and his two remaining daughters had to bear their sorrow alone. Through it all, Marie had been an ever-ready support and comfort to her friend. As they walked home from the funeral, Louise said feelingly:

"What should I have done without you, Marie? You've been so kind to me, and I — I didn't deserve it! I —"

Her voice choked and she could say no more. Marie slipped an arm around the waist of her friend, and, lovingly kissing her tear-stained cheek, replied consolingly:

"Don't say another word, Louise; it only makes you more sorrowful. We understand each other and —"

"No, you don't understand all — you don't *know* all!" Louise interrupted quickly. "Let me tell you

— I must tell you; never can I be happy again until I've made a full confession!"

"Louise! What do you mean?" Marie interrogated, in mild wonder.

"I mean that I've been false and wicked, Marie! You'll never forgive me when I tell you —"

"Louise!" was all that Marie could say.

"It's too true. When I came to you and pretended that I wanted to make a friendly test of Paul's affection for you, I acted a lie!"

Marie stared at her friend. She could not understand what Louise meant. The others had passed on and left them. The two young women stood facing each other. The vagrant breeze caressed Louise's olive cheek and toyed with Marie's golden tresses, as though it could not tell — fickle thing — which it admired the more. Louise went on mercilessly prodding the iron into her own soul.

"Yes, I practiced deceit. I acted a lie! I framed a lie with my lips! I loved Paul."— Marie started.—"Do not shrink from me! Wait until you've heard all. Then, if you find it in your heart to scorn and despise me, I shall have no just cause for complaint. I loved Paul and I wanted to win him. I willfully planned to supersede you. I — I — but I *cannot* go on! I loved him — he cared naught for me. He was true as steel to you. He told me that he loved you and meant to marry you. I have been justly punished — but,

oh, none but God knows how I've suffered! Marie, can you forgive me?"

She held out her hands with a pleading gesture, and bowed her head in shame. The French girl rushed forward, in her impetuous way, and throwing her arms around the neck of her former rival cried:

"Of course I forgive you, Louise! Could I blame anyone for loving my Paul? We shall be the same friends we have been in the past. I can afford to be magnanimous — for have you not proven to me that my lover is a true and noble man!"

"Yes," Louise murmured, almost inaudibly, "he's a gentleman. I don't love him as I did, Marie; but I shall respect him always. Are you sure that you freely and fully forgive me?"

"Very sure."

"But — but you cannot forget."

"Don't say that — let's never mention the subject again — let's both strive to forget!"

Louise's face bespoke a sense of relief and comfort she had not known in days. The horrid secret was out; and the one against whom she had sinned forgave her.

"You've been so good to me, Marie. But you mustn't leave me yet. I feel very lonely — so lonely that I can't spare you. Won't you make your home with me, for a time, at least?"

"Do you desire my company so much, Louise?"

"Can you ask?"

"Then, with Aunt Nancy's consent, I shall be glad to stay with you for awhile. It'll be very agreeable to me, in more ways than one; I shall have the pleasure of being with you, and I shall have more comfortable quarters than Uncle Isaac's overcrowded cabin affords."

In the evening, Stacey and Graydon came for a walk with the young ladies. It was the first time for days that the two couples had been together. As they set out, Louise took John's arm, and they led the way. All felt somewhat depressed over the death of the child; for in those primitive communities like the Marietta settlement, the simple-minded people felt deeply the sorrows and joys that fell to the lot of their friends and neighbors. Little was said as they rambled through the village of log cabins. Low down on the western horizon, sheet-lightning was playing; and occasionally an indistinct muttering growl told that a thunderstorm was hovering there. Frogs croaked along the dark river banks, and fireflies flitted and circled across the fields of waist-high corn.

As the friends reached the bridge across Tyber Creek, Hester Lovelace met and passed them. She held her head high, and appeared unconscious of their existence. In the faint light of the gathering dusk, her features shone ashen and haggard; and her coal-black hair, falling in unconfined masses

below her waist, lent to her a weird and uncanny aspect.

Marie shivered and drew closer to Paul's side.

"What is it, dear?" he asked softly.

"Didn't you see her, Paul — your cousin? She flitted by like a wraith."

"I saw her."

Again the girl shuddered.

"What's the matter?" he inquired.

"I don't know, Paul; but for some reason the sight of Hester Lovelace inspires in me a feeling of nameless dread."

"Don't be worried; soon we shall leave, and go where she cannot follow us. We're making all haste for our departure."

"But it will take some months to build the block-house and cabins, Paul. You will be away from me for days at a time — with her here. I shall die of horror!"

"I wish you could stay with Louise until I can make a home for you. You would be more content; and I should be better satisfied of your safety —"

"She has invited me."

"I am glad. I shall leave Gumbo here to guard you. No harm can come to you. Have no fears — but don't venture out after dark or alone; and avoid my cousin."

On the evening of the eleventh of July, a man stood in the shadow of a large elm upon the Mari-

etta bank of the Muskingum. Apparently he wished to escape observation; for, as John Stacey and a number of others — who had been building a boat farther up the river — passed near him, he crouched low at the foot of the tree and scarcely breathed. When the men had passed on, he arose and with an oath muttered angrily:

"Curse the luck — curse the girl! If she plays me false and does not come, I'll have her heart's blood. I'm a fool to be here on such an errand. Why is she so long in coming? Hohum! so she is old George Lovelace's daughter — the child of the man who run me out of the Shenandoah valley, because I was too fond of a bit of good horseflesh. He had me in his power, and I *had* to go — had to leave everything that I owned and held dear. Well, the wheel of fortune has made a turn. Today I've his daughter in *my* power — and I'll make the most of my chance! It would be nice to go back to old Virginia after so many years' absence, as the husband of George Lovelace's fair daughter, and the master of his vast estate. That would be a change worth making — from an outlaw among savages, to the owner of one of the finest estates in the valley of the Shenandoah. By the gods! It's worth risking something to gain. Hello! here she comes now."

But it was not Hester. It was a settler hunting a cow that had strayed from the enclosure in which she was confined at night. Red Wallace hastily hid

himself behind the tree-trunk, and waited until the solitary colonist had passed by. Then he stepped from his hiding-place and, closely scanning the western heavens, muttered:

"There's a thunderstorm coming up, too. So much the better; no one will be abroad. I wish the white jade would come! What can be keeping her? I've thought out the whole matter during the past week. There's nothing like a week alone in the woods to sharpen one's wits. She's old George Lovelace's only child — a little thing of eight or ten years, she was. And that nigger — curse him! — is one of the old man's slaves; and Mr. Paul Graydon — " Here Wallace ground his teeth at the recollection of the young Englishman — "is a cousin of Miss Hester's. Is it any wonder that I hate the family? I've been put upon by the old man, the nephew, and the *nigger!* But every dog has his day; and my day's at hand. Fortune, they say, knocks but once at a man's door. Well, I'll not bar her entrance. On the contrary, I'll take the door off the hinges, bid her come in, and give her the best stool in the cabin!"

He chuckled, and again glanced at the darkened heavens.

"Storm's coming up fast. Whew! what a flash and crash! It'll soon be here. I feel the wind that's under it. In the devil's name! Why doesn't that woman come? Hark! Here she is at last."

A light and cautious step approached his hiding-

place. Nearer it came; hesitated and stopped. He made no movement, coolly waiting to see what she would do.

"He hasn't come," he heard her complain. "I should have known he was but amusing himself — Oh!"

It was Hester's voice. Her exclamation was in answer to a vivid flash of lightning that, like a polished blade, ripped open the black curtain of the sky and let through the first large drops of the coming storm. She placed her hands against her ears and blindly ran forward, as a rattling crash of thunder followed; and sprang directly into the outstretched arms of Red Wallace.

"Hello!" he exclaimed, as he folded his muscular arms around her. "You come in dramatic style. Don't try to get free, my pretty bird! Afraid of thunder and lightning, eh? Well, I'll protect you — you needn't tremble so. That was a pretty sharp flash, though — enough to scare anybody. This is a romantic sort of night for a lover's tryst. There — there!"

"Loose me!" she panted as she struggled to free herself from his brutal embrace.

"Let me have a kiss from those sweet lips, first," he replied as he bent over her.

"How dare you! Loose me at once!"—And, at the words, she dealt him a resounding slap upon the face.

"You she devil!" Wallace exclaimed as he re-

leased his hold upon her. "Just wait — I'll pay you for that blow!"

By this time the fury of the storm was upon them. The lightning flashed incessantly; the thunder boomed and rolled ceaselessly; and the rain, driven by the stiff gale, descended in unbroken sheets that, falling upon the foliage of the trees, roared like a miniature cataract. Hester was thoroughly frightened at the storm, and by the actions of her half-savage companion. A dozen times, within as many seconds, she wished she had not come. She would have attempted to return, but she did not dare to brave the fury of the elements. Red Wallace divined her thoughts, apparently, for after a few moments' silence, he came close to her and said laughingly:

"It's all right, little woman; I didn't mean anything by my rude words and actions. You jumped right into my arms and I couldn't help but hold you for a little while, you know. It isn't often that I've so good a chance to hug a pretty young lady." And again he laughed.

Hester made no reply to his lame apology; so he proceeded:

"Come, stand up closer to the tree-trunk or you'll get wet; the water's beginning to drip through the branches. Now, let's have a complete understanding — Heavens! What a crash! Come nearer, or you won't be able to hear me — I'll not lay hands on

you. Out with it now. What do you want me to do?"

"I've told you," she answered, as she leaned against the great tree, and drew a deep breath.

"You want this Marie Fontanelle killed?"

"Yes; or removed beyond my cousin's reach. I want him to suffer torment — the torment of irreparable loss and never-ending uncertainty. If you kill her, he mustn't know she is dead — he musn't recover the body. Do you understand?"

"Perfectly," was the quiet rejoinder. And he was silent for some moments. Presently he asked:

"How would it suit you to have her stolen by the Indians?"

"Wouldn't he follow her and bring her back?"

"Not if *I* have her stolen."

"You are sure?"

"Absolutely. Besides, she would suffer as much as he."

How cleverly he led her! He knew the prospect of her rival's suffering would appeal to the evil side of Hester's nature.

"That's what I want!" she cried eagerly. "Do that — do it soon — and you shall be amply rewarded."

"In what way?"

"In what way! I have wealth — gold; it shall be yours to command."

"How much?"

"How much will I give you?"

"Yes."

"A thousand pounds."

"It would take that much to procure the services of the Indians."

"Two thousand pounds."

He shook his head as he shifted his position to avoid the water that was dripping upon him. The storm was passing and the rain had settled to a steady downpour. Hester could not see her companion's gesture — she could barely discern the outline of his burly figure; but his silence irritated her.

"What do you mean — what do you want?" she cried sharply. "Name your price."

"You won't pay it."

"I *will!*"

"My price is your estate and — your hand!"

"What!"

"You heard what I said."

"Never!"—Her voice was little more than a hoarse whisper.

"I told you you wouldn't pay the price. Very well; it's all one to me. You'd better run home now — I'm going."

He made a move to leave her; but she fiercely gripped his arm and gasped:

"No — no! Don't go — wait. I will do anything — anything. I'll sell my immortal soul to pay you! When can you have this — this girl stolen?"

"As soon as I can bring a few Indians here, and

catch her beyond the outskirts of the village."

"Can't you do it alone?"

"I can steal her, but I can't escape with her; I must have help. The settlers would overtake me and recover her."

"It would be an easy matter to kill her."

"Very easy."

"No! I don't want that done — she wouldn't lead a life of suffering and hardship then. I want her to live — to weep her baby eyes out — to feel the torture that the savages know so well how to inflict. She shall be made captive by the Indians."

"And you're ready to pay the price?" he questioned, a suppressed chuckle in his tone.

"Now?"

"No; when the job is done."

"*I — will — pay — the — price!*"

"Very well; but remember that I'll not be tricked. If you attempt to evade any part of the debt — you know what I mean — I'll have your life!"

He caught her by the shoulders and held her so firmly in his cruel grasp, that she winced.

"Don't!" she almost screamed, from pain and fright. "You hurt me! I'll do what I've promised. Do you want any money now? I have some at the cabin — I can get it for you."

He released his hold.

"No. I'll call on you when I need it. I want you to remember your promise, that's all. When the job's done we'll have a settlement of our accounts.

I'm to get the redskins to kidnap the girl, and carry her beyond the chance of rescue; you're to marry me and make me master of old George Lovelace's extensive plantation in the Shenandoah valley. Is that the bargain?"

"Yes," was the faint reply. Then quickly: "But how do you know I'm George Lovelace's daughter?"

"I know it — that's enough. I'd accompany you to the cabin, but it's better for us not to be seen together. You shall hear from me in due time; until then, leave everything to me."

CHAPTER XXI

A MONTH slipped by. Paul Graydon and the other members of the company formed for the colonization of the middle Muskingum, labored assiduously. They built boats for the transportation of their chattels; cleared a few acres of ground; repaired a cabin upon the site of their proposed settlement, that had been the home of some adventurous squatter, ere the land came into possession of the Ohio Company; and erected another cabin and a blockhouse. Then they were ready to transfer themselves and goods to Big Bottom.

Marie was still making her home with the family of Governor St. Clair; and she and Louise were inseparable companions. As the days passed and no harm befell her, the French girl ceased to worry over the presence of Hester Lovelace. Her nervousness wore away; and her old gayety reasserted itself.

In conversation with her lover one evening she said:

"I was weak and foolish, Paul, to imagine your cousin meant me harm. I've met her several times since you've been going to Big Bottom; and she

pays me no attention whatever. Of course, I've followed your advice — I don't venture beyond the village alone or go out after sunset. Hester appears very sad and lonely. I really pity her."

Paul was pleased to hear his sweetheart speak as she did. He was beginning to believe he was unduly exercised in regard to her safety. He himself had met Hester more than once; and she had ignored his presence and passed on. Paul replied:

"You speak like your brave little self, dear one; and I rejoice to hear you. We expect to move the first of September; but there is much to do to make the place really habitable. We shall experience a winter of hardship and discomfort. With your consent, I shall leave you here until spring. I've talked over the matter with Isaac and Nancy, and, they heartily endorse my views. You'll be much more comfortable here; for Nancy will be the only woman among us, and we shall have but poor accommodations. By next spring, we shall have a cabin of our own."— And he smiled.

"Louise has asked me to stay with her until spring, but — " she began.

"Then you'll stay, will you not?" he eagerly interrupted.

"I don't want to be away from *you,*" she murmured, laying her golden head upon his shoulder.

"We shall see each other often, sweetheart," he said reassuringly; "some one must procure and forward supplies to the others, and I'll assume that

duty. I'll live here with Gumbo; and make frequent trips to and from Big Bottom."

She laughed: "You've changed your plans greatly, Paul."

"Have I?"

"Yes. A few weeks ago you were all anxiety to remove me from Marietta; now you're just as anxious to leave me here. Why is it?"

"For the reason that I feel now you will be more comfortable and more nearly secure from harm in Marietta than at Big Bottom. Here there's little danger from an Indian attack. I cannot say as much for our new settlement."

A few days later Gumbo and a companion were in the woods, searching for one of Governor St. Clair's horses that had strayed. They returned in the dusk of the evening, and announced that they had seen Indians skulking in the underbrush a mile from the village. The news spread rapidly and caused anxiety and alarm. The next morning a number of settlers and soldiers went out to look for the Indians; but could discover no trace of them. The men returned, declaring that Gumbo and his companion had willfully deceived the people. The negro stubbornly shook his head and said:

"I reckons dis nigger knows a red debil w'en he sees one — I does!"

"Where did you see them?" General Putnam asked.

Gumbo described the place.

"How many were there?"

"Six 'r seben."

"What were they doing?"

"Jes lollin' in de dead leabes under de brush, like so many hogs."

"Did they see you?"

"I doesn't know, sah."

"Did they have any weapons?"

"I didn't wait to see, sah; I jes dusted right outen dar!"

Gumbo's companion was questioned, and confirmed all that the black had said. General Putnam stroked his shaven cheek, and remarked to the group of citizens around him:

"I'm convinced that these men have told the truth. They saw Indians. The savages are lurking about the village, bent on murder and pillage. Let every man be on his guard. I'm expecting an outbreak at any time — and this small band may be the advance guard of a large party."

Then seeing a number of the Big Bottom colonists among his auditors, he turned to them and offered them this sage advice:

"Boys, you'd better defer your removal to Big Bottom until next spring. You're brave and self-reliant; but you're young and inexperienced. Isaac Meeks is the only one in your company who has reached middle age; and he knows little of Indian warfare. Take my advice — you'll rue it if you don't. An Indian outbreak is coming; and your

settlement will be exposed and practically defenseless."

Colonels Sproat and Stacey and other prominent men joined with General Putnam, in his efforts to persuade the young men to defer their project; but to no purpose.

Hester had heard nothing from Red Wallace, since their interview the night of the thunderstorm. At times, she hoped he had abandoned all thought of kidnaping Marie, and had left the country never to return. At other times she was furiously angry that he did not put in an appearance, and stormed that her act of vengeance was so long delayed. She shuddered when she thought of the agreement that she had entered into with the stranger of whom she knew nothing; and marveled at her own depravity. But she rejoiced when she contemplated the suffering and sorrow that would fall to the lot of the lovers; and had no care for her own future. Torn by conflicting thoughts and emotions revenge was still her dominant impulse.

When she heard the report that Indians had been seen in the immediate neighborhood of the village, she knew what it meant. Wallace had kept his promise. Her eyes shone, and the cruel and relentless look upon her face, which had become habitual, was intensified. She clapped her slim, white hands; laughed and cried hysterically:

"Today — tomorrow — and the blow will fall! She will be torn from his bosom and hurried away

never to return. I shall see and gloat over his anguish of spirit. He'll know I am his Nemesis — but he'll be able to do nothing, to prove nothing. To-morrow — the day after — and the blow will fall!"

But the blow did not fall. Instead, her accomplice met her one morning when she had wandered beyond the confines of the village. He told her that he had failed signally. She found fault with him, and he returned angrily:

"I've done all any man *could* do. I went to a hunting party of Delawares in camp upon the Tuscarawas, and persuaded eight of them to aid me in kidnaping the girl. I promised them gold and plunder — if it could be obtained. For two weeks we have lain in the woods and watched the settlement. But the yellow-haired miss refused to walk into our trap. She kept among the cabins and did not venture abroad after nightfall. That nigger, Gumbo, has dogged her heels all the time. The Delawares got discouraged and left. The plan has failed; but the redskins must be paid. I want some gold. I daren't break my promise to them."

"Not a grain shall you have until Marie Fontanelle is a captive among the savages far beyond the chance of rescue."

Barely were the words out of her mouth, ere he caught her by the throat and thrust her against a sapling that stood near. Her features grew dark and her eyes bloodshot; but he did not loose his hold upon her.

"You stubborn wench!" he cried hoarsely. "Do you want me to choke the life out of you? Will you, or will you not, give me that money?"

She essayed to speak; but a gurgling, inarticulate sound alone came from her lips. He released her; and she sank upon the ground, speechless and helpless. When she recovered her breath she gasped:

"Yes."

"All right!" he replied. "Here, let me seat you upon this stone. Now, no more kicking over the traces, my fine filly, and we'll get along first-rate. Listen to me. I've tried and failed; but I'm not yet done — not by a long shot. But I'm not to be fooled with — you'll find that out — and when I set my head to do a thing I never give up. Do you follow me?"

"Y-e-s," was the murmured answer.

"Well, this cousin of yours and a number of others are forming a settlement about forty miles up the Muskingum. They'll remove the first of next month. I overheard some of them talking as they descended the river, a few nights ago. This Fontanelle girl will accompany them, or will join them, within a few months, at the farthest. Isaac Meeks is of the company. Do you understand?"

Her head nodded, and her lips moved; but no sound came from them. He resumed:

"It'll be easy to bring enough redskins to attack and destroy the settlement, and carry the girl into captivity — much easier than to steal her from here."

"So long — so long!" she whispered.

"What's that you say?" he demanded.

"It's long — so long to wait!"

"Yes, I suppose it seems a long time to you; you're so full of touch-and-go. But long or short, it's the best we can do; and there's no use kicking. I want no more objections raised to my plans, nor refusals offered, to my demands — I won't have it. You're to bring me fifty pounds in gold, this evening, to pay the Indians I brought here. I'll follow them and reward them; I can't afford to do anything else, for I'll want their services again. Fifty pounds is all I need for the present. You'll bring it?"

"Yes," she replied listlessly.

"Now, you are coming 'round!" he laughed. "You'll make a model wife one of these fine days. I've been away from you a month. As your accepted lover and prospective husband, I'll take just one sweet kiss at parting."

He bent over her and pressed his lips to hers, before she was aware of his intention. Contrary to what he had expected, she did not fly into a passion. Instead, she arose and said quietly, sadly:

"If you are through, with your violence and insults, I'll return to the village."

As she turned her back upon him and walked away, he stared after her in blank surprise, muttering:

"Meek as Moses! Completely cowed! I thought I knew how to tame the haughty jade. I'll have no

further trouble with her now; and, in the end, I'll be owner of old George Lovelace's wealth."

He slapped his thigh and chuckled as he moved into the depths of the forest.

With lagging footsteps and bowed head, Hester walked toward the cabin where she lodged. Her proud defiance had changed to abject subjection; and her look of cruel and relentless hate to one of haggard hopelessness.

* * * * * * *

The company organized for the purpose of establishing a colony at Big Bottom, consisted of thirty-six members. One thing after another hindered their preparations for departure, and they did not remove until about the middle of September, seventeen hundred and ninety. Only about twenty-five members went to establish the colony, and brave the dangers of a winter upon the middle Muskingum. Of this number, several soon grew disgusted at the hard fare, and returned to Marietta. Isaac Meeks and family, John Stacey and Paul Graydon were among those who embarked their all upon one of the narrow barges, and pulled away for the land of promise.

Big Bottom was situated upon the east bank of the Muskingum, about forty miles above the mouth of the river and two miles below the mouth of Bald Eagle Creek, where stood the lodge of Silverheels. The plain, or "bottom," stretched along the shore of the stream, and consisted of level and rolling

land covered with a heavy growth of trees. It was three-fourths of a mile wide and five miles long, and was the largest tract of valley land between Marietta and Duncan's Falls. The new settlement was sixteen miles from Waterford, and about the same distance from Wolf Creek Mills.

The settlers had three buildings — two log cabins and a blockhouse. The latter was two stories in height, with walls of green beech logs, and puncheon doors and floors. It stood about fifty yards from the bank of the stream, in the center of a small clearing. The cabins were makeshift affairs of unhewn logs. One stood a short distance above the blockhouse; the other, a short distance below it. A few yards above the clearing, a small stream put into the river; forming a broad and shallow ravine; and, back of the open space cleared by the settlers' axes, the level land rose gradually toward the base of the hills three-fourths of a mile away.

Isaac Meeks was the oldest man in the colony; his wife, the solitary woman; and his two children — Johnnie and Annie — were the only persons of tender age. The other settlers were young, unmarried men, with the exception of James Batten, who was a middle-aged bachelor. As handed down by local tradition, the names of the members of the little band, that thus braved the perils of the trackless wilds, were: Francis and Isaac Choate, Thomas Shaw and James Batten — occupying the upper cabin; Asa and Eleazar Bullard — living in the low-

er one; and Isaac Meeks, wife, and two children; John Stacey and his brother, Philip; Ezra Putnam, John Camp, Zebulon Throop, Jonathan Farewell, James Couch, William James and John Clark — having quarters in the blockhouse. There were a number of other "associates" of the company; but they did not have a permanent residence at Big Bottom. Paul Graydon was one of these.

The year being so far advanced, the borderers could do little more than supply their temporary needs. Isaac Meeks, John Stacey, and William James scoured the woods for game, while the others fished, or worked at clearing the land. They procured their corn and salt from Marietta. The former they prepared for use, by pounding in a stone handmill, or by having it ground into coarse meal, at the mills upon Wolf Creek, sixteen miles away.

The blockhouse contained but two rooms, the one over the other; and afforded crude and scant accommodations. The men slept upon skins and feather ticks spread in front of the great fireplace on the first floor, while Nancy and the children occupied a bed upstairs. Of comfort there was little — of luxury, none; but of freedom, novelty and adventure, an abundance.

No pen can portray the life led by this band of hardy pioneers in the heart of the American wilderness. They arose with the sun, and with the sun retired to rest. Their manners and speech were rude and unpolished; but their hearts were brave and ten-

der. Their fare was coarse and homely, consisting mainly of cornbread and game; but it was nourishing in quality and plentiful in quantity. They saw the forest leaves change from green to gold and crimson; and they garnered the frost-browned nuts that fell from the boughs of the shagbark-hickory, the walnut and the butternut. The first snow fell — its unspotted whiteness contrasting strangely with the gray of the tree trunks, the brown of fallen leaves, and the blue-green of the water; the settlers battened the crevices in their dwelling-places, and piled the firewood high about their doors. Winter came in earnest—the snow lay deep in the forest, and the Moose Eye shivered under its heavy coat of ice; the colonists piled the wood higher in the yawning fireplace, and, eagerly sniffing the toothsome vapors of hot roast-turkey and corn-pone, pulled their stools around the board and thanked God for the bountiful repast that was spread before them.

In the midst of wild beasts and savages, sixteen miles from their nearest neighbors, and forty miles from a doctor, they lay down and slept as soundly as though within a walled city, with a cordon of police around them. But they made the mistake of not erecting a palisade around their buildings, and placing a sentry each night.

Paul Graydon was apprehensive of an Indian attack; and each time he came to the settlement he begged his companions to be watchful. But they

laughed at him, and scouted the idea of an attack in winter. Paul and Stacey went over to Silverheels' cabin and asked him to join the colonists; but he refused. His answer was:

"I am both paleface and red man — and I am neither. I shall live alone."

"Do you think there is any danger of the Indians attacking our little settlement?" Paul inquired.

"The Delawares and Wyandots are squaws — they like not the deep snows of winter," the Shawnee replied contemptuously. Then with a sweep of his hand he concluded: "But their burning desire for scalps and plunder may warm their feet and send them forth. The palefaces should bar their doors and sleep with one eye open."

"Will you not warn my people, if you know of their danger?" Graydon asked very earnestly.

"Ugh! Silverheels has not forgotten his friends; he will be a watch-dog. He will bark if the Delawares draw near."

CHAPTER XXII

LATE in November, Johnnie Meeks fell ill of lung-fever. His mother had more than she could do to attend him and cook for those directly dependent upon her. When Paul made his next visit to Big Bottom, she said:

"Mister Paul, I want you to go right back to Marietta an' bring my gal up here; I can't get along without 'er, nohow."

"But," Paul objected, "she may not want to come. Can't you take care of Johnnie yourselves — you and Isaac?"

"Isaac!" she snorted contemptuously. "He's of no earthly 'count in sickness — jest sets 'round an' smokes his pipe an' cracks his fingers. Might as well 'ave a wooden man, fer all the good he is at such times. Johnnie's awful sick, an' he's got to be took care of. He cries an' cries fer Marie to come; an' she's *got* to come — that's all ther' is of it. As fer her not wantin' to come, that don't make no differ-'nce. Tell 'er I said she *had* to come. She'll want to come, though, when she knows I need 'er, 'specially when you tell 'er Johnnie wants 'er. She thinks a pow'rful sight o' Johnnie. You go right down an' git 'er, Mister Paul."

"It's very cold," Paul persisted. "The river is frozen; and I don't know how I could bring her. She couldn't skate so far."

"You can put 'er on a sled an' push 'er — that's how. You can do it easy enough, if you want to. I won't rest easy a minute till she's here."

"Nor let any one else rest," the young man muttered under his breath. But he replied discreetly: "She's safe and comfortable there. I don't like the idea of bringing her here until spring. By that time I hope to have a cabin erected and arrangements made for her reception. I'll marry her in Marietta before I bring her to Big Bottom — "

"But you ain't married *yit*, an' she don't belong to you," Nancy returned, with flushed face and flashing eyes. She was growing angry at Paul's persistency. She continued:

"She's *my* gal till you marry 'er — an' I want 'er here; an' I'm a-goin' to 'ave my way 'bout it, too!"

"Very well," he replied hastily, "I'll inform her of your desire, and she may decide for herself what she'll do. I don't wish to run counter to your wishes; only, I feel she would be safer there than here — "

"It's safe enough fer the rest of us here; an' it's safe enough fer her. Talk o' safety! Great safety ther' is in Marietta, fer 'er — right ther' with that cousin o' yours. I wonder she hain't stuck a knife into Marie, afore this. No, Mister Paul, she's my gal *yit*. When you an' her's married, you can settle

y'r own affairs. I won't say a word. But *till* that time, I mean to 'ave a say 'bout *some* things!"

The next forenoon, Paul skated to Marietta; and, as soon as he had transacted his business, called upon Marie at Campus Martius. He informed her of Johnnie's illness and Nancy's desire.

"How can I get there?" were Marie's first words.

"You'll go, then?" he returned, a little surprised at her readiness.

"Yes, I'll go; Uncle Isaac and Aunt Nancy have been kind to me, in many ways. Of course my aunt is a chronic scold, and very disagreeable at times. But she's in trouble, and I must go to her. With all her rough ways, she's kind-hearted. She would do as much for me. Is Johnnie very sick?"

"He appears to be."

"Wouldn't it be well to take Dr. True with us?"

Paul answered smilingly: "I don't think that it is necessary. You'll prove the better physician of the two; Nancy informed me that the little fellow was calling for you in his delirium."

The tears came into the girl's eyes, as she replied:

"Then I can't think of refusing to go. Should he die, I could never forgive myself. When can we be off — and how can we go?"

"I'll fashion a small sled upon which you can ride. I can skate and push you. We'll start tomorrow morning."

"Won't that be hard work for you, Paul?"

"No, indeed," was his laughing reply. "I shall skim you over the ice like a bird."

"And there's no danger?"

He looked grave as he replied: "There is no danger in making the journey; but I fear you won't be safe at Big Bottom. I've a premonition that if you go there, some great calamity will befall us. The situation is exposed; and the men are heedless of danger. I fear an Indian attack — and at a time that I shan't be there to defend you. Don't go. Let me say to your aunt that you've decided to remain in Marietta, until spring."

She gently patted his bronzed cheek, and said:

"You're morbid, Paul; no harm will befall me. I must go — I must do what I feel to be my duty, at all hazard. Let's brood over remote and possible dangers, no longer. I'll be ready to start in the morning."

"You'll return at the end of a few weeks — as soon as the boy's better?"

"No, I'll go to stay. There'll be no need of making a return journey. Soon you'll be at Big Bottom, all the time; and I shall be there with you. I can endure the crowded blockhouse for a few months — until we have a cabin of our own."

And she blushed prettily.

Paul felt much more cheerful as he left the quarters of the St. Clair family and went to his own room in the northeast blockhouse. His conversation with Marie had dispelled much of his foreboding.

His sweetheart's presence invariably had the effect of clearing his mental sky, of the clouds of discouragement.

He found Gumbo repairing a splint-bottomed chair and giving a part of his attention to a pot of beans that bubbled and simmered upon the coals. The negro looked up at Paul's entrance, his sable countenance shining with delight, and cried:

"I's pow'ful glad to see you dis mornin', Marse Paul — I is. I had de mos' distressful an' veracious dream las' night dat eber was. I dremp dat dem scalpagin Injin debils had 'tacked de Big Bottom; an' killed an' massacreed ebery libin' soul in de settlement but you."

"And I escaped, did I, Gumbo?" Paul replied, seating himself upon a stool and warming his feet at the fire.

"Yes, dat's w'at troubles me, Marse Paul."

"Explain."

"You knows dat dreams goes by c'ntraries, Marse Paul. If I dreams dat you's killed, den you's not killed; an' if I dreams dat you's *not* killed, den you's *killed.*"

"Is that so? Well, you dreamed that there was a massacre, so there'll *be* no massacre — if your theory's the true one."

"How's dat, Marse Paul?"

Paul repeated his statement. The negro's smile relaxed into a broad grin, as he answered:

"Dat's so — hadn't elucidated de subjeck in dat

way. Dar's nuffin' like habin' a good head fo' confusin' yo'se'f."

Graydon told his black companion of Johnnie's illness, and the change that it had worked in his — Paul's — plans.

"An' is dis nigger to go, too, Marse Paul?" Gumbo asked.

"No, you're to stay here until spring. I shall be with you a part of the time. When spring opens, we'll be in a cabin of our own at Big Bottom. With Prince to draw the plow and you to help me in the clearing —"

"An' de purty little gal to cook de co'n-pone an' meat —" Gumbo interjected.

"We shall get on very nicely," the other completed. Then both laughed heartily at the prospect.

"How is Hester comporting herself?" was Paul's next question.

A look of sadness overspread the darky's face, as he replied:

"She doesn't 'pear to be up to no debilment, Marse Paul; she jes' rummages 'round froo de settlement, like a cold shadder. I pities her — I does. She's as thin an' white as paper, an' she hacks an' coughs all de blessed time. Poor gal! She looks mo' an' mo' like de ol' missus, eb'ry day."

"I wish I could speak with her," Paul said musingly; "and advise her to return to Virginia. This climate is too severe for her, and —"

"It wouldn't do no good fo' you to say a word,

Marse Paul; she'd jes' fly into a tantrum — she's like de ol' missus in dat way."

"Yes, I know. Well, I must be off to prepare for the trip. I'll be back in an hour for dinner. By the way, I want you to make a small sled this afternoon, on which I can convey Marie and her things to Big Bottom."

"All right, Marse Paul," was the cheery answer Graydon heard, as he passed through the door.

At sunrise next morning, Marie bade a tearful farewell to Louise, and dejectedly followed her lover through the western gate of Campus Martius. On reaching the river bank, they found Gumbo awaiting with everything in readiness. Marie seated herself upon the diminutive but comfortable vehicle; Paul tucked the fur robes around her, strapped the skates upon his feet, and, grasping the wooden handles of the sled, pushed away up the river.

"Goodby, Marse Paul an' Miss M'rie!" the poor black shouted, the tears in his eyes. "Don't let de red debils steal de purty little gal, Marse Paul!"

"Goodby, Gumbo — goodby!" floated back to him, upon the crisp air.

It was a bright, cold morning. Hoar-frost hung upon the bare branches of the trees and sifted down upon the travelers, as they passed, like downy feathers from a fairy's wing. The clear, green ice boomed and cracked as they flew over it, causing Marie to break forth in bird-like exclamations of alarm,

at which Paul laughed immoderately. Never had he seen her so beautiful. The keen air lent a heightened tint to her cheeks. The morning sunbeams turned her hair to rivulets of molten gold; and her bright eyes were brighter than was their wont. Inspired by the exhilaration of the rapid, gliding motion, she babbled and laughed incessantly, until Paul's brain was in a whirl. Wrapped in the billowy fur-robes, and seated coquettishly upon the flying sled, she was the living, breathing reincarnation of some ancient queen of the Northland. Is it a cause for wonder, that he was willing to cast aside worldly wealth and bury himself in the heart of the western wilderness, to win her?

As they passed a point some ten miles above Marietta, a man peering from the mouth of a shallow, rocky cavern, that overhung the river, drew back involuntarily and muttered to himself:

"Graydon and his sweetheart, or I'm a spotless saint!"

He watched the couple until they turned the bend and disappeared from sight. Then, grimacing and chuckling, he stamped out the embers that burned upon the rocky floor, caught up his rifle, and, descending a steep and winding path among the rocks and bushes, reached the river bank and stepped out upon the glassy ice.

"Man's extremity is the devil's opportunity!" he parodied, as he set off in the direction of Marietta. I was almost ready to give up in despair and

return to the comforts of my cabin on the Tuscarawas. By all the gods above and below! I've had a cold and comfortless time of it for the last few days — cooped up in that den, with a little dried meat and chill air for a diet and the damp rock for a bed. It'll take a month of sunshine to thaw me out. I'm cold to the marrow of my backbone. Ha! ha! Thus is patience rewarded. Won't the charming Hester be glad to hear the good tidings. Red Wallace, your luck is returning."

The next moment a scowl corrugated his low brows; and, with an oath, he hissed between his strong fang-like teeth:

"I may be wrong after all; perhaps they're out for amusement, and are not on their way to Big Bottom. Oh, if I had had half a dozen of my Delawares and Wyandots at my back! Success perches upon the banner of him who watches and — prays; and I've been watching and praying for many moons. It may be the fascinating Miss Lovelace has grown tired, and returned to her broad acres in Virginia. No matter; I can follow her. The prize is almost within my grasp. I don't admire her temper overmuch; but I'll *tame* her. Curse this slavish walking — one slides about like a drop of water on a hot griddle!"

A number of young people were skating upon the Muskingum, in front of Campus Martius. As Red Wallace passed among them, he asked of a group of boys near the shore:

"Who was that young man and young woman that went up the river an hour or two ago?"

The lads shook their heads negatively, except one who looked up from the skate that he was fastening, and returned:

"Was the woman on a sled, and the man pushing her?"

"Yes."

"It must 'ave been Mr. Graydon and Miss Fontanelle. I didn't see them; but as I came down to the river I met the negro, Gumbo, who told me Mr. Graydon had just started for the new settlement, Big Bottom, with Miss Fontanelle on a sled."

"Are they coming back on the ice?" Red Wallace asked carelessly.

"They're not coming back at all," answered the lad working industriously at his refractory skate straps; "at least that's what the darky said. He told me Miss Fontanelle's going up to Big Bottom to live. Gumbo was down in the mouth because they had left him here alone."

"Well, it's no concern of mine," Wallace remarked, as he sauntered away from the group; "I thought if they were coming back on the ice, they'd find it pretty soft by tomorrow."

He left the river and went directly to the cabin where Hester staid. His vigorous rap upon the heavy door brought a prompt response from the interior, the savage growl of a dog. Wallace waited a few moments; then, turning away, grumbled:

"Nobody at home. Where in the plague can that minx be? Hello! Here's another crowd skating at the Point. Perhaps she's among them."

He walked down to the shore and found Hester standing watching the skaters. She was wrapped in heavy furs, but her features looked pinched and blue.

"I know why you come," were her first words; "but we cannot talk here. You know where I'm staying?"

"Yes."

"Very well; the others are away from the house. Go there — I'll join you in a few minutes."

"But there's a dog there," he objected. "I went to the cabin to find you; the beast growled when I knocked upon the door."

A sneer curled her thin lips as she replied:

"You are indeed brave and fearless! The dog is chained to the back wall; he can't harm you."

Wallace made no reply to her cutting taunt, but, turning on his heel, proceeded to the cabin. The dog — a huge mongrel — rolled his blood-rimmed eyes, tugged at his chain, and showed his white fangs, in a foam-dripping snarl. Finding that he could not reach the intruder, the wolfish animal dropped upon the floor; and, resting his head upon his paws, watched the man and growled sullenly.

The cabin was better furnished than most of the others in the village. It contained two beds, a chest of drawers, a table, chairs, and other articles of

household furniture. The floor was scoured to snowy whiteness; and the hearth upon which smouldered an expiring fire was free from litter. Red Wallace took this in at a glance. Then he seated himself to await the coming of Miss Lovelace.

"Who lives here with you?" he inquired, when she entered a few minutes later.

"Mr. and Mrs. Gosney," she responded, as she drew a chair up to the hearth.

"Where are they?"

"They went to Belpre this morning."

"There's no danger of our being seen or heard, then?"

"None."—And she coughed and shivered.

"What's the matter with you?" he cried half angrily. "You cough like a person nearly dead of consumption; and you look like a shadow. I never saw such a change in any one in my life."

"I am not well — I've contracted a heavy cold," was all the reply she made to his brutal remark.

"Well, you want to get back to Virginia as soon as you can, or you won't live six months. But, now to business. Did you think I had abandoned our project, and was never coming back?"

"I didn't know," she replied listlessly, as she stirred the coals and laid on a few sticks of wood.

"Maybe you didn't care!" he cried sharply.

She held her blue-veined hands over the blaze, pulled her fur wrap more closely around her shoulders, and murmured, as though talking to herself:

"Yes, I wanted you to come back. I have not lost my desire for revenge. I am sick — sick of delay. Once my appetite is sated, I shall be ready to die."

"Bah!" he sneered. "You're not going to die. A woman don't die of delay or disappointment. You'll live to marry me and return to your birthplace in the Shenandoah valley. Stop that whining about death and the grave; you make me feel creepy. Perk up and listen to what I have to say."

"I am all attention."

"Listen, then. I've been among the Delawares and Wyandots, in their hunting camp upon the Tuscarawas. I've made arrangements with a party of warriors, to attack Big Bottom and carry off the girl. I came back a few days ago, to find out the status of affairs; and I learn your rival has gone to the new and unprotected settlement to live —"

"When did she go?" she interrupted, her cheeks flushing.

"This morning."

"You saw her?"

"Yes."

"How do you know she's going to stay there?"

"What I see with my own eyes and hear with my own ears, I know."

She arose to her feet and swayed to and fro as she cried:

"Then — then you can strike the blow at once!

You can have her abducted — carried away by the savages at any time!"

"Now, you appear like your old self," he laughed. "Yes, I shall strike the blow as soon as I can retrace my steps to the Tuscarawas, and bring my pack of red hounds down upon them. It will take but a few weeks, at most. I want some gold."

"You shall have it! How much do you want?"

"A hundred pounds to bind the bargain. It'll take more than that; but I can pay them after the job's done."

"I haven't that amount with me."

"How much have you got?"

"Sixty pounds."

"I can make it do. Give it to me."

She brought the bag of gold coins from a drawer in the chest that stood against the log wall, and threw it into his outstretched hands, saying:

"You can have more when you want it; but I shall have to send to Virginia for it. I shall send immediately for a hundred pounds — "

She stopped speaking suddenly, and looked him full in the face for several seconds.

"What is it?" he inquired, an amused smile flickering about his sensual mouth.

"There will be no failure this time?"

"None."

"You purpose to attack the settlement?"

"To wipe it out of existence."

"The settlers are brave and well armed — they may repel your attack."

"They are practically defenseless, and inexperienced and careless. We'll take them by surprise. There'll be no failure this time; I've spied around the place, and I know when and how to make the attack."

"You understand that Paul, my cousin, is not to be killed or injured?"

"I understand perfectly."

"He may be there at the time."

"No matter — he shan't be hurt."

"It is great slaughter!"— She shuddered and covered her face with her hands.—"Perhaps there is some other way —"

"Stop!" he thundered, snatching her hands from her face and shoving her into a chair. "None of the white feather, now. You've gone too far. A few dead men more or less! Bah! What does it matter? Come — keep a stiff upper lip! Revenge is sweet. Paul Graydon will be a heart-broken man — and blackness and ashes will mark the site of the settlement at Big Bottom. I'm off now. A few short weeks and you'll be my bride, eh?"

He left the cabin — hastily glancing to the right and to the left as he closed the door behind him, and strode away. She sat by the fire, rubbing her numb hands over each other and mumbling incoherently:

"Revenge! A bride! A bride of Death — he

shall bear me afar upon his white horse — his fleshless arms shall enfold me! Revenge — revenge is sweet! A bride — a bride of Death!"

CHAPTER XXIII

PAUL and Marie reached Big Bottom in safety. The weather grew warmer and the river cleared of ice. Johnnie's illness abated. The short, rainy December days hurried by, and Christmas drew near. On the twenty-second of the month, the weather grew colder, and ice again covered the surface of the stream. Christmas day, Johnnie ate of the roast turkey that graced the center of the board; and his mother replenished his wooden platter more than once with hominy, venison and corn-pone. Every one in the isolated community was enjoying the best of health, and for once the old saw — "A white Christmas makes a lean graveyard"— was verified. At three o'clock in the afternoon, the weather changed. The wind, that had been from the west, suddenly veered to the north and blew an icy gale down the valley, that whitened the landscape still more and sent the settlers, shivering, in doors.

It grew colder and colder, and the snow ceased to fall. The howling of the wind among the stripped branches of the trees kept the lone colonists awake until far into the night. At midnight the wind fell and the temperature with it. When morning came the blue Muskingum again wore a heavy coat of ice,

and the bark of the forest trees snapped and cracked in the intense cold.

One bright, cold day followed another. The first of January arrived; and, with it, Colonel Stacey from Marietta. He came to see his two sons, John and Philip, and to satisfy himself that the residents of Big Bottom were in no danger from an Indian attack. He was much displeased at their carelessness.

"It's a good thing for all of you," he said, "that I took it into my head to skate up here. What do you mean by such criminal negligence? I'm surprised! Here you are without a pallisade or anything to guard you from an Indian surprise. I suppose you're not in the habit of placing a sentry at night, even?"

"We haven't seen the need of pallisade or sentry —" began William James, smiling good-naturedly.

"Seen nothing!" the colonel snorted angrily. "Do you expect the redskins to come and warn you of their presence? I've been a captive among them and I know their ways. You may depend upon it they've been spying around here, and are well aware of your defenseless condition. They're not fools by any means. They may be down upon you at any time —"

"But," interrupted Francis Choate, "they're not in the habit of going on the warpath, in the depth of winter."

Colonel Stacey smiled pityingly and replied: "Not in the *habit* — no. But it doesn't take much in the way of scalps and plunder, to induce them to change their *habits*. Mark my words! If you don't enclose your buildings with a pallisade, organize yourselves into a company for defense, and place one or more sentries every night, you'll come to grief. I entreat you to do as I advise!"

Paul Graydon and John Stacey joined the colonel in his appeal. So well did they plead, that they were promised that a palisade should be erected as soon as the weather would permit, and that a picket should do duty each night at the future. When Paul — accompanied by the colonel — started for Marietta that afternoon, he felt that his companions at last fully realized their exposed condition and would not allow their enemies to surprise them.

As he kissed his sweetheart and bade her goodby, he said:

"I'll return the day after tomorrow. Be of good cheer; springtime is coming and with it a home of our own."

"But, Paul, I'm so uneasy, so — so — I don't know how to tell you. I feel that something dreadful is about to come upon us — that I shall be taken from you — that —"

"Pshaw — pshaw, little one!" he laughed lightly. "Our idle clatter of pallisades, sentries and Indian attacks has made you nervous. Run back to the blockhouse now; it's too cold to stand out here in

the snow. See! Colonel Stacey is already far down the river; I must hasten to overtake him. Goodby — and God bless you!"

He was gone. To Marie, the gray clouds were grayer and the cold winds colder for his absence. Once back at the blockhouse in the chimney corner, a strange hopelessness took possession of her. What did it all mean? Was she nervous, simply — as Paul had said — or was some great calamity impending?

The short afternoon sped and night came. The colonists stationed a sentry at one of the blockhouse loop-holes, and lay down to sleep. When morning came, the picket reported that nothing more dangerous than a prowling fox had invaded their domain. They laughed at their precautions, and declared that in the future they would dispense with the needless trouble.

Sunday, January the second, seventeen hundred and ninety-one, was bright and clear. There was no church for the borderers to attend, so they spent the day playing games indoors, rambling around the clearing, and shooting at a mark. Zebulon Throop skated down to Wolf Creek Mills, and returned with a bag of meal upon his shoulder.

"It has thawed some today, but it promises to be a cold night," John Stacey remarked to Marie, as they stood in front of the wide fireplace and watched the savory bear-steaks broiling upon the red coals, for supper.

"The wind's rising," returned the girl; "it wails and sobs among the trees like a restless spirit."

"My old grandmother used to tell me," James Couch interjected, "that when the wind makes that kind of noise a murderer is abroad."

Marie shivered and drew near the fire.

"Stop your croaking, Couch!" Stacey cried sharply. "Let's talk of something cheerful. Somebody tell a story, while supper is cooking."

Nancy's voice broke in:

"Marie, you take this trencher o' hominy over to the Choate boys at the'r cabin; ther's more'n we can eat, an' they haint got any."

"Let me take it," cried young Philip Stacey; "I'm better able to face the wind."

"No — no," Marie answered, "I'll take it. I don't fear a little cold."

She tripped away with the agility of a fawn. The heavy door banged behind her as she flew across the open separating the upper cabin from the blockhouse. Just as she reached the door of the hut, she chanced to glance toward the ravine a few rods up the river. Among the shadows of the gloaming, she caught sight of moving figures emerging from the depression. A moment's observation told her they were Indians!

Hastily jerking the latch string, she bounded into the room; and the door closed behind her. The four inmates were seated around the supper table, but they sprang to their feet. She placed the

trencher of hominy upon the board. Isaac Choate caught her arm and cried:

"What is it? Your pale face tells me something's amiss."

"Indians!" she gasped.

"Where?" the four men asked in concert.

"At the mouth of the ravine, just above — I saw them as I reached your door!"

"It can't be — surely you're mistaken!" they replied.

She pressed her hand over her heart and shook her head. James Batten ran to the door and lifted the latch to peep out. As he did so, a stalwart Indian in war paint and feathers crowded through the narrow opening, and, with a grunt of satisfaction, advanced toward the center of the room. He was followed immediately by several others, while a larger body encircled the doorway.

Marie sank into a chair. She expected instant death at their hands; but she made no outcry.

The inhabitants of the cabin were speechless with amazement. Thomas Shaw was the first to recover his presence of mind. He advanced toward the chief, and, holding out his hand in token of friendship, said:

"What do you want? Are you in need of something to eat?"

The leader of the Indians nodded; and the whole party within the house helped themselves to the food upon the table, passing pieces of corn-bread and

meat, to those on the outside. They were armed with rifles, tomahawks and knives. When they had devoured the food, they made signs to the whites to surrender. Overawed by the superior numbers, the four offered no resistance.

Two warriors came forward and took hold of Marie. Pale and trembling, she arose and permitted them to bind her arms behind her. A discussion between her captors, over who should take charge of her, was cut short by a large, fleshy-faced, red-haired brave shoving the disputants aside and leading the girl into the open.

As she reached the cold air outside, Marie heard the blockhouse door creak upon its hinges and saw in the flood of light that streamed from it, a group of dusky forms surging toward the entrance. A volley of shots followed by screams and groans came to her ears; and, with the cry —" My God! they are murdering them!"— she sank senseless upon the snow.

After Marie's departure for Choate's cabin, an oppressive quiet held sway in the blockhouse; apparently no one was in a talkative mood. Nancy, assisted by two or three of the men, went on cooking supper. Isaac took both children upon his knees, pressed them to his breast and trotted them softly. John Stacey stood close to the fireplace, idly beating a tattoo with his fingers, upon the log wall. Suddenly little Johnnie Meeks piped:

" Pap, what's the matter with Lion?"

Nancy was the only person to offer armed resistance

The dog, bristles erect and fangs flashing, had arisen from his warm corner and glided to the center of the room. Now, with a deep, angry growl, he leaped toward the door and scratched at the puncheon barrier.

"Down, Lion — back to y'r corner!" Nancy commanded; but the hound refused to do her bidding.

"Ther's somethin' 'r somebody there that he don't like," quietly remarked Isaac, looking over his shoulder.

"Hark! What's that?" cried Philip Stacey, springing to his feet, a startled look upon his beardless face.

"*I* heard nothing," his brother replied.

"*I* heard something at the door," Philip said. "There —"

The sentence was never finished. The door flew open, and an Indian sprang over the sill, waving his hand to his comrades. In answer, a dozen rifles cracked, and a number of the settlers fell in the throes of death. The others reached for their arms; but it was too late. A second volley, and the savages rushed in to finish their bloody work. Zebulon Throop dropped dead at the first shot. Isaac Meeks sank into eternal rest, with his two children clasped in his arms. Nancy was the only person to offer armed resistance. Catching up a heavy axe, that stood in the chimney corner, she towered above the prostrate form of her husband and attempted to protect from death, the pleading children. A stalwart

brave made effort to snatch the weapon from her hands; but with a screech of defiance she brought it down upon his head, almost severing one-half of his face, and burying the edge of the blade in his shoulder. With a howl of pain, he staggered through the door and fell in a writhing heap. At the same moment, a tomahawk was buried in the brain of the woman. Thus was she saved from the unspeakable horror of witnessing the murder of her two children, which occurred an instant later. Lion, the fierce deerhound, fell fighting for them.

At the first volley, John Stacey reached for his rifle, but slipped and fell prone upon the floor. The second shower of bullets flew over his head. Leaping to his feet, he rushed toward the door, shouting the name of Marie. Beaten back by the tomahawks of the Indians, he sprang up the ladder to the loft. As he left the room below, he saw the slaughter and realized that the savages were giving no quarter. Frantically he tore at the clapboards of the roof. At last, he was able to pull himself through the opening, and felt the cold air upon his fevered brow. Murmuring—"Marie! Marie!"—he crawled along the comb of the roof and prepared to drop to the ground. But the savages were on the alert. With yells of fiendish delight, they levelled their guns at him.

"For God's sake, spare me!" he called to them. "I'm the only one left!"

The red imps whooped—and fired. A convul-

sive shudder, and he fell with the one word — "Marie"— on his lips. Faithful John Stacey! He deserved a better fate!

The two Bullard brothers, in the lower cabin, were not aware of the attack, until aroused by the shots. They reached the open air, just in time to hear John Stacey's appeal for mercy, and to witness his brutal murder. Stealing into the forest near at hand, they made their escape. When a hundred yards from the cabin, they heard the Indians' yells of baffled rage at finding the nest empty and the birds gone. The young men were not pursued; and that night they bore the news of the massacre to Waterford and Wolf Creek Mills.

The comfortable farmhouse of Obadiah Brokaw today stands upon the site of the log hut occupied by the two brothers, who alone of all the company escaped death or capture at the hands of the savages.

As they were looting the blockhouse, the savages discovered Philip Stacey in hiding. A dozen tomahawks were raised to brain him; but the red-headed warrior who had led Marie from the upper cabin, leaped in front of the uplifted weapons and shouted in English:

"Hold! There has been enough of this cursed butchery. The youth is my prisoner."

Young Stacey caught his savior around the knees and murmured his thanks.

"Get up," the other cried roughly, "and come with me!"

The young man obeyed; but, as he looked the red-haired brave full in the face, he uttered the involuntary exclamation:

"Red Wallace!"

"Sh — !" cautioned the outlaw. "Yes, Red Wallace. In my excitement, I betrayed myself. But if you value your life, keep your secret to yourself. Tell not a living soul. Come!"

Wallace led Philip from the room, pinioned his arms behind him, and gave him into the care of two warriors. Marie had regained consciousness; and was weeping, and calling for relatives and friends. By the orders of Red Wallace, a litter was made of boughs and bedding, upon which she was placed. The wind had fallen, but the night air was bitter cold. Her captors wrapped quilts around her and, raising her upon the shoulders of four stolid braves, set out upon their journey. The light of the burning blockhouse followed them, as they left the clearing and proceeded along the bank of the river. Of the five male prisoners, Philip Stacey only was permitted to walk close to the litter bearing the young woman; the other four — Isaac Choate, Francis Choate, James Batten and Thomas Shaw — were kept in the front of the column.

As the party left the eastern bank of the stream and started across the ice, a dark form flitted from tree to tree, in pursuit. When they reached the opposite shore and took up their line of march toward Bald Eagle valley, the same shadowy form trotted

softly in their footsteps. After fifteen minutes' rapid walking, the Indians stopped and held a consultation. Then a small band of warriors left the main body, and climbing the ridge of hills that skirts the river, set off toward Waterford and Wolf Creek Mills.

The main party moved forward; but scarcely were they in motion, when the sharp crack of a rifle rang out, and a painted brave threw up his hands and dropped dead in his tracks. For a few moments consternation reigned. There was no moon, but a subdued starlight faintly illuminated the forest. Several Indians crept cautiously in the direction whence the shot came; but discovering no trace of the daring marksman soon returned. Philip Stacey heard Red Wallace mutter —"One of the settlers that escaped from the lower cabin!" Then the outlaw began to talk in the Delaware tongue; and the young man could glean nothing further.

Stationing two of their number among the trees, to intercept the avenger, the redskins resumed their journey. They proceeded up Bald Eagle Creek, to the dividing ridge that separates it from Little Wolf Creek, crossed the divide, and descended into the valley of the latter stream. On the narrow strip of bottom-land at the base of the hills, they went into camp for the night; but not until another warrior had yielded up his life to the mysterious Nemesis.

The savages built roaring fires, withed the prisoners to small saplings, and, placing sentries among

the trees beyond the range of the firelight, lay down to sleep. Red Wallace arranged a bed for Marie, but did not speak to her. The poor girl's faculties were so benumbed by the horrible events of the night, that she hardly realized where she was; and it was well for her that such was the case. Philip Stacey was placed with the other prisoners. Left alone, Marie at last sobbed herself asleep. But in her dreams she frequently started, and murmured the names of the children and pleaded with Paul to come to her aid.

The next morning the Indians cooked for breakfast a part of the food that they had obtained at Big Bottom, giving their captives a liberal allowance. Then they held a prolonged council. The whites could not understand what was said; but they knew a wordy war was in progress between the principal chief and Red Wallace. At the end of an hour, the dispute was brought to a sudden close. The chief mounted a fallen log and made a ringing appeal to his warriors, to which they listened with respectful attention. When the Indian had finished, Wallace leaped upon the log and addressed his copper-colored allies. As a result the party again divided—one-half of the braves joining the chief, and the other half casting their lots with the outlaw. The chief took the five male captives, and crossing the stream set out for the distant villages upon the Maumee; while Wallace and his companions, with

Marie, proceeded up the valley, toward the hunting-camp upon the Tuscarawas.

As the two parties disappeared among the trees, a solitary Indian arose from the shelter of a hazel copse, and retraced his course toward the Muskingum. It was Silverheels!

CHAPTER XXIV.

ASA and Eleazer Bullard were the only members of the Big Bottom settlement that escaped death or capture. When the two brothers fled from the lower cabin, they dodged nimbly from tree to tree, and were soon hidden in the depth of the forest. Here they paused. They heard the crash of blows on the cabin door, and the Indians' yells of rage and disappointment; and they expected to have a dozen of the red fiends hot upon their trail. Night enveloped them, as they drew near together and conversed in cautious undertones.

"Hark! Do you hear any sounds of pursuit?" Asa whispered.

"None; they're not following us," the brother answered.

"We can do nothing for our friends — they're beyond mortal aid," Asa remarked, after a minute's silence. "Let's hasten to warn the settlers at Wolf Creek Mills and Waterford."

"Yes, come — look! They've fired the blockhouse!"

Eleazer pointed to a glow that lighted the heavens above the clearing. The light grew and spread until it illuminated the distant tree-tops and penetrated far into the dark recesses of the forest.

"Come!" Asa exclaimed. "We must hasten or we may arrive too late. May God forgive the ignorant savages for this night's work; *I* never can!"

They set off through the cold and darkness of the winter night. Their course led them straight down the river toward the hunting camp of Captain Rogers, four miles below. Arousing him, they told of the calamity. The captain and his companion, a Mohican Indian named Dick Layton, joined them; and without delay the four hastened across the hills toward Wolf Creek Mills. At ten o'clock they arrived and gave the alarm.

In the words of the early historian: "On announcing the news of the attack on Big Bottom and the probable approach of the Indians to the Mills, great was the consternation and alarm of the helpless women and children. Several additional families had joined this station since the year seventeen hundred and eighty-nine; but a number of the leading men were absent, to attend the court of quarter-sessions, which was to sit at Marietta, on Monday. This rendered their condition still more desperate, in case of an attack, which they had every reason to expect before daylight in the morning. The gloom of night greatly added to their distress and gave energy to their fears. Under the direction of Captain Rogers, who had been familiar with similar events, the inhabitants, amounting to about thirty souls, principally women and children, were collected into the largest and strongest cabin. * * *

"Into this cabin, they brought a few of their most valuable goods, with all the tubs, kettles and pails they could muster — which Captain Rogers directed to be filled with water from the creek, for the purpose of extinguishing fire, should the Indians attempt to burn the house, which was one of their most common modes of attack. The door was strongly barred and the windows made fast; the men, seven in number, were posted in the loft, who, by removing a few chunks between the logs, with here and there a shingle from the roof, soon made portholes from which to fire upon the enemy. Like a prudent soldier, their leader posted one man as a sentry on the outside of the house, under cover of a fence, to give timely notice of their approach. It was a long and weary night, never to be forgotten by the mothers and children, who occupied the room below and thought they should be first sacrificed, if the Indians entered the house. Just before daylight, the sentinel gave notice of their approach. Several were obscurely seen through the gloom of night, near the sawmill, and their movements distinctly heard as they stepped on some loose boards. Their tracks were also seen the next morning in some patches of snow. * * * *

"A messenger was dispatched early in the night to give the alarm to the people at Waterford, and two runners were sent to Marietta. Nothing could better demonstrate the courage and humanity of Captain Rogers than his conduct in this affair, thus

to weaken his own means of defense, by parting with some of his most active and brave men to notify the sleeping settlers of their danger, when he had every reason to expect an attack from an overwhelming force in a few hours."

All through the tedious hours of the long winter night, speedy messengers bore the warning words to the scattered cabins of the Waterford settlement; and the madly alarmed colonists rushed to the block-house and prepared for the attack that never came. As the cold, gray dawn crept into the valley, two exhausted runners reached Marietta, and told of the fate of Big Bottom and the danger at Wolf Creek Mills and Waterford. The cannons at Campus Martius and Fort Harmer spread the news throughout the village. Two sturdy-limbed, fleet-footed young men bore the word of warning, to Belpre. General alarm and consternation prevailed. It was the universal opinion that Big Bottom was destroyed; Waterford and Wolf Creek Mills, doomed; and Marietta and Belpre, seriously threatened. Nothing could be done except to prepare for the worst and hope and pray for the best.

A half hour before the arrival of the two runners from Waterford, Paul Graydon and Gumbo had started for Big Bottom, with a hand-sled laden with corn, salt and ammunition. Both were swift skaters — having learned in New England when Paul was a student at college; but the snow on the ice impeded their movements, and their progress was labored and

slow. When a few miles away, they heard the reverberating boom of the cannons at Marietta.

"What's the meaning of that?" asked Paul.

"I doesn't know, Marse Paul — I doesn't," Gumbo replied with a vigorous shake of the head. "It must be de sojers at de fort, salubricatin' de new year."

"It's not that," the young Englishman returned positively; "this is the third of the month. I cannot understand it. Something serious is amiss."

"Dar dey goes ag'in — boom — boom! — two ob 'em!"

"Those are the cannon at Fort Harmer," Paul said as he bowed his head and listened; "the other reports were at Campus Martius."

The roar of the brass pieces echoed over the wooded slopes, and died out among the distant hills. After several minutes, Paul remarked:

"Let's resume our journey. Whatever may have been the cause, it has ceased; and we shall learn nothing by tarrying longer."

"P'r'aps we better go back an' see w'at was de matter, Marse Paul."

"No; we shall be weary enough when we reach Big Bottom, without retracing a part of our course. The sun's rising, and soon the ice will be softening. We have no time to lose."

When they reached Waterford, the sun was high, and the half-melted snow and ice formed a thin slush through which the sled dragged heavily. As

they were toiling past, a man, with a rifle in his hand, ran swiftly down the bank to intercept them.

"Hello! Where are you going?" he called, as he flourished his gun and beckoned them to stop.

"To Big Bottom," Paul replied, as he paused and waited for the other to come out to him.

The man moved slowly over the wet ice, balancing himself with his gun. When he reached Graydon's side, he inquired:

"Where do you come from?"

"Marietta."

"You say you're going to Big Bottom?"

"Yes."

"You haven't heard the news, then?"

"What news?" Paul asked, quickly, his lips paling and a feeling of dread taking hold upon him.

"The Indians attacked the settlement last night, and killed all but the two Bullard boys," the man answered quietly, as he set one foot upon the sled and leaned upon his rifle. "They brought the word to Wolf Creek Mills. We got it here about eleven o'clock last night. Two runners were sent to Marietta; but they went across the country, and I suppose they hadn't got there when you left. It's awful —"

Paul Graydon heard no more. Every drop of blood forsook his features. His brain reeled and a black wave swept over him.— "Dead, dead! All dead — all gone!" he moaned, as he dropped back upon the sled.

"I didn't know he had friends in the massacre," said the man, sympathetically.

Gumbo stood like an ebony statue for a moment. Then, as his master hardly moved, the faithful fellow exclaimed suddenly in excitement:

"De little gal's callin' to you, Marse Paul! I hears 'er voice, an' she's sayin'—'Paul! Paul! Help — help!' She isn't dead, Marse Paul; I knows somehow dat she isn't! 'Spect dat Red Wallace has done gone took 'er —"

The effect of these words upon the young Englishman was magical. He struggled to his feet and stared wildly around him. The settler came forward and said kindly:

"I didn't mean to shock you, stranger; I didn't know you belonged at Big Bottom. It isn't so bad as reported, I guess. The Bullard brothers escaped while the fight was in progress, and don't know how many were taken captive. Your friends may be alive. Don't give up all hope."

"Dat's good news, Marse Paul!" the black said consolingly. "Cheer up, an' we'll done find de little gal, an' git 'er outen de clutches ob dat Red Wallace —"

"No, she isn't dead," Paul said with white lips. "You're right, Red Wallace is at the bottom of this. He has taken her captive. But oh, God! captivity among the Indians — in the power of such a man — is a fate *worse* than death!"

"Don't say dat, Marse Paul! Long as she's ru-

minatin' 'mong de red debils, dar's hope. But if she was libin' wid de dead, dar wouldn't be none."

"True!" Paul cried. "Let's delay no longer. Come, Gumbo!"

"You don't mean to go on to the settlement alone do you?" the settler inquired.

"Yes," Paul answered shortly.

"Wait until tomorrow; a number of men are going up there to bury the bodies."

Graydon shudderingly replied:

"No; I go today, and alone."

"I goes wid you, Marse Paul, doesn't I?" Gumbo asked.

"If you choose — yes, of course you go with me."

"You take your lives in your hands to go up there alone," the settler said, earnestly. "If we weren't momentarily expecting an attack here, I'd go with you."

"There's no danger in visiting Big Bottom," Paul replied; "and you'll not be attacked."

"What do you mean?" asked the man in great surprise.

"I mean that the savages have accomplished their purpose, and have beaten a retreat. I haven't time to explain further."

Leaving the sled-load of goods to the settler, and taking only some salt and ammunition, Paul and Gumbo continued their journey. Neither uttered a word, as they pushed swiftly up the stream. Paul's strokes were nervous and erratic, but strong

and rapid; and his companion had great difficulty in keeping pace with him. The water upon the surface of the ice rose in fine spray as they cut their way through it, and saturated their nether garments; and the sweat trickled down their cheeks. On — on, with unflagging energy, mile after mile, they glided, until at last they turned a bend — and the little clearing upon the eastern shore came in sight. Then it was that Paul slacked his headlong speed.

"Gumbo, old friend,"—And his voice trembled.— "yonder lies all that is left of our little colony. The despoiler has been there. Help me to bear the burden of my grief, whatever we may discover!"

As they proceeded, the charred and blackened walls of the blockhouse rose into view; for the green beech logs had successfully resisted the flames. There they stood, a sable monument to the hardy pioneers who found a grave within the inclosure. Paul set his jaws and clenched his hands, until the nails cut into his calloused palms. Not a sign of life was visible about the ruined settlement. On reaching the shore, the two friends found their feet benumbed with the ice-cold water and the pressure of the skate straps; and it was difficult for them to stand alone.

"Marse Paul," Gumbo said calmly, "you set down on dis stone, an' let me go up dar an' see w'at I discobers. Dat's de bes' way — de sight may be too much fo' you. I'll be back in jes a minute, Marse Paul."

"No," Paul answered resolutely, "I must know the worst at once; I must see for myself!"

His handsome, clear-cut features, accentuated by the raven blackness of his ringletted hair, shone ivory-white in the midday sun. His stiffened limbs trembled under him, as he painfully struggled up the slope that led to the level land on which stood the ruins of the ill-fated blockhouse. Gumbo kept at his side and watched him closely, but said nothing. They reached the top of the short grade and stood there, panting from exertion and excitement. To right and to left, lay the lower and upper cabins, tenantless, but untouched. Directly in front, was the funeral pyre that held the secret they had come to learn. Paul shook himself and staggered a step forward. Suddenly the negro caught his companion's arm in a vise-like grip and whispered:

"Marse Paul, dar's one of dem murderin' Injin debils dis berry minute!"

"Where?" the other asked fiercely as he gripped the stock of his rifle.

"Jes come from de woods down 'hind de upper cabin. Dar! You's can see his shoulder an' arm stickin' 'round de corner — dar's de side ob his head! He's lookin' at de blockhouse. Gib it to him, Marse Paul, gib it to him! De obnoxerous calamity!"

Paul was on the point of flinging his gun to his shoulder, when Silverheels stepped into the open and came toward them. He leaned his rifle against

a stump, and, holding out both hands to the young man, said in a heartfelt way:

"White Eagle, it grieves the heart of Silverheels to see you here. Red Fox has visited the lodges of the palefaces; and the Blue-eyed Pigeon is gone."

"She is alive, then!" Paul cried, the light of a great joy illuminating his features.

"Ugh!"

"Where is she — where has he taken her?"— The speaker was trembling with feverish eagerness.

"The Blue-eyed Pigeon is unharmed; but her plumage is ruffled and stained. The Red Fox has taken her to his den upon the Tuscarawas."

"You are my red brother, Silverheels. Come with me — let's set out to recover her! Come — we must not delay!"

The Indian tenderly laid his hand upon the other's shoulder and replied:

"It is the heart of White Eagle that speaks now; not his head. My white brother is trembling with hunger and fatigue. He could not follow the trail — he would fall to the earth. See, his breath is short and his hand shakes. He must come to the lodge of Silverheels, and eat and sleep. When the sun again rises from his bed, we shall be upon the trail of Red Fox and his squaws."

"No —no!" Paul pleaded, "I'm not hungry — I need no sleep. Let's hasten to overtake them!"

Silverheels shook his head. "We cannot overtake the Red Fox. He glides swiftly through the

woods and over the rocks. We must go to his den to find the Blue-eyed Pigeon — the Red Fox will not devour her."

"But she's in that man's power —" Paul began, growing more and more excited.

Silverheels pointed toward the zenith, and interrupted him with: "Has my white brother so little faith in the power of his God?"

"Dat's a home shot, Marse Paul!" Gumbo said, with a sound in his throat that closely resembled a chuckle. "Dat's right down good sense, ef it did come from an Injin debil!"

The negro received a scowl from the Shawnee, but rattled on: "If Silverheels's to he'p us git de little gal back, we's got to foller his device — dat's all; kase he knows mo' erbout red foxes, an' red debils, an' Red Wallaces in a minute, dan we does in a y'ar. Dat dar renegadin' Wallace isn't gwine to harm de purty little gal; he's jes' kidnapered 'er, to please Miss Hester, an'—"

"Gumbo!" Paul cried, sharply.

"W'at is it, Marse Paul?"

"You're talking too much."

Then, turning to Silverheels, the young man continued: "Gumbo is right, my red brother; you know much more than we. I want you to help me to rescue her who is dearer than life to me. I'll leave all to you. What do you know of the massacre? Was my friend, John Stacey, taken captive also?"

"The friend of White Eagle lies yonder, with many others."— And the Shawnee pointed to the blockhouse ruins a few yards off.

Paul covered his face with his hands and bowed his head in profound grief. Silverheels and Gumbo maintained a respectful silence. After a few moments, the young man dashed his sleeve across his eyes and, looking up, asked in a choking voice:

"And — and Isaac Meeks and family — are they dead, also?"

"Ugh!" the red man replied stolidly.

"A wholesale massacre!" Graydon groaned. "See what a horrible thing your people have done, Silverheels!"

The Indian started back a step, and a look of malignant and revengeful hatred swept over his rugged features. Drawing himself up stiffly, he answered:

"I have no people! The palefaces discard me; and the red men disown me. I am a Shawnee — but I am alone. I have no people!"

"Forgive me," Paul returned humbly; "I didn't mean to hurt your feelings. I cannot expect you to feel as I do, about this terrible affair. Tell me what you know of it."

The three men — representatives of three distinct races — seated themselves upon a fallen tree-trunk; and the red hunter began, speaking in the third person, as was his habit in extended narrative:

"Silverheels was far up the Bald Eagle, tracking

a wounded buck. The sun wrapped himself in cloud robes and lay down to rest, and the lean shadows spread themselves through the forest and covered the trail. He gave up the chase and started to return to his lodge upon the Moose Eye; but as he descended from a hillside into the valley of the Bald Eagle, he discovered the tracks of many moccasins in the snow, and said to himself, 'The Delawares and the Wyandots are upon the warpath, and the palefaces — the friends of White Eagle — are in danger.' Silverheels remembered his promise to his white brother, and hurried toward the lodges of the palefaces, as the startled fawn flees before the baying hounds; but he came too late. Red Fox, with many Delawares and Wyandots, was there before him. When Silverheels was speeding down the river like an arrow, the shifting wind brought to his ears the warwhoops of the red men and the sharp voices of their rifles. Then he knew that the slaughter had begun, and that the Red Fox was lapping blood with his split tongue."

The Shawnee paused and Paul asked:

"Did you see the massacre?"

The Indian replied: "No; Silverheels did not see the murder of the palefaces. When he arrived upon the scene, the bloody work was done and the big lodge was in flames."

"Did any escape?"

"Ugh!"

"How many?"

Silverheels held up two fingers?"

"The Bullard brothers?"

"The two palefaces that lived in the little lodge." — And he pointed to the lower cabin.

"How many were taken captive besides Marie?"

The Shawnee raised a hand with the fingers outspread.

"Five?"

"Ugh."

"Who were they?"

"The four that dwelt in the upper lodge and the brother of White Eagle's white friend."

"Philip Stacey?"

"Ugh!"

"And all the others are dead?"

"Ugh! They are dead."

"How many Delawares and Wyandots were there, Silverheels?"

"More than my white brother has fingers and toes."

"About twenty-five?"

"Ugh!"

"W'at did dem red debils do w'en dey'd killed an' kidnapered eberybody?" Gumbo inquired, his eyes rolled upward until only the whites were visible.

Silverheels did not reply.

"Did you follow them? How do you know that Red Fox has gone to his den upon the Tuscarawas?" Paul asked.

"When Red Fox with his squaw-braves left the

lodges of the palefaces, the Shawnee was his shadow. He followed them as they crossed upon the ice and entered the wood; he was at their side when they halted. When Red Fox sent a few of his warriors across the hills to frighten the palefaces upon Wolf Creek —"

"Did he do that?" Graydon interrupted.

"Ugh! The Red Fox is sly; he frightened the hounds to keep them from smelling out his track. Silverheels saw all and understood. His rifle spoke; and a Delaware started on his long journey toward the spirit-land. The Shawnee followed Red Fox up the Bald Eagle, and across to Little Wolf Creek. Again his rifle spoke; and a Wyandot hastened to overtake the Delaware that had gone before. By the ice-bound stream, the enemies of the Shawnee built their camp fires and spent the night. This morning a disagreement arose between Red Fox and the chief of the Wyandots. Their slippery tongues dropped many words. The chief of the Wyandots would go to their village upon the Maumee; the Red Fox would go to their hunting camp upon the Tuscarawas. The band divided, a part going with the Wyandot, and a part with Red Fox."

"And the prisoners?" Paul suggested as Silverheels ceased speaking.

"The blue-eyed maiden has gone to the sparkling waters of the Tuscarawas · the others, to the black waters of the Maumee."

Graydon arose and said: "I must go to the ruins

of the blockhouse and search for my dead friends; I cannot leave until they have received decent burial."

He walked toward the ruins. Silverheels and Gumbo silently followed. As they reached the yawning doorway and peeped in at the blackened corpses half covered by ashes and charred timbers, the negro remarked:

"Marse Paul, dar comes some men 'cross de riber on de ice."

The new arrivals proved to be Captain Rogers and a few companions from Wolf Creek Mills, who had come to look after the interment of the dead. Paul and his friends joined them in their melancholy task. Few of the bodies could be identified. The ground outside being frozen, the pioneers consigned the dead to a common grave within the walls of the blockhouse. Today their bones moulder in the center of a blooming clover meadow; and no monument marks the spot. The flowing river ripples a song to them, the burden of whose refrain is — "Peace;" and the south wind whispers — "Eternal rest!"

CHAPTER XXV

WHEN the marauding band of Indians, that had destroyed Big Bottom, divided upon Little Wolf Creek, the Wyandot chieftain took with him the five male captives, while Red Wallace retained possession of Marie Fontanelle. With the subsequent fortunes of the five men, this narrative has nought to do. Four of the five returned to their friends, and young Philip Stacey died a prisoner upon the Maumee. Marie's name does not appear in the old chronicles with those of the other captives, for the reason that it was not certainly known, until years after the massacre, just who had been killed and who had been captured. Besides, few knew she was at Big Bottom at the time of the attack.

The braves took turns in bearing the litter upon which the young woman lay, with her limbs securely bound. Wallace, his face bedaubed with war paint, marched at the side of the improvised palanquin, with impassive countenance. During the whole of the forenoon, he did not address a word to Marie. In low, guttural accents, he gave commands to the ten warriors that composed his band; but as he spoke in the Delaware tongue, the girl understood nothing he said.

The day grew warm; and the melting snow filled the watercourses with a tumbling, yellow flood, that retarded the progress of the party, causing them to make wide detours to ford the swollen streams in safety. Poor Marie! She had aroused from her stupefied condition of mind and fully realized what had taken place. Her nearest and dearest friends were dead, and she was a bound and helpless prisoner among the savages. Where was Paul? Would he follow the Indians and try to liberate her? To be sure he would! But he might not be able to overtake them; and if he were, he might be killed in attempting her release. She shuddered at the thought of her desperate condition, and of the danger Paul would encounter should he attempt to save her. She was a woman — she could not free herself, but she could think and plan; and over and over in her mind, she evolved project after project, only to cast them aside as impracticable. The sun beamed into her eyes; and her head ached. She had not touched the food offered her at breakfast, and now she felt faint and sick. She closed her eyes to shut out the sunlight; and the swaying motion of the litter rocked her to sleep.

She awoke with a start. Her swinging bed was rocking dangerously, and the roar of surging water was in her ears. She lifted her head and saw that her captors were attempting to ford a broad, swift creek. She heard Wallace's sharp commands, and the grunts and exclamations of the braves. Sud-

denly the feet of one of the four shot from under him, and, in a moment, all were floundering in the water, with the litter and its occupant atop of them. With a curse, Red Wallace sprang forward, and, catching her in his arms, exclaimed:

"Don't be frightened, my lovely jade; I'll get you safely to shore. Curses on those awkward brutes!"

She looked into his repulsive countenance besmeared with warpaint, and a gleam of recognition flashed into her eyes. In that moment she knew him as the red-haired renegade, who had been pointed out to her on more than one occasion in Marietta.

Once on the bank, the Indians kindled a fire and commenced the preparation of their midday meal. Wallace turned to Marie and said:

"I see by your face that you know me, my sweet maid."

"I — I don't know your name," she faltered.

"You've seen me, though."

"Yes, I've seen you."

"At Marietta?"

"At Marietta."

"My name's Red Wallace."

Marie made no reply.

"Since you recognize me," he continued, "we may as well have an understanding. However, let me release you first."

He took a keen-bladed, ivory-handled dagger from his belt and divided the thongs that bound her

limbs. Then, dropping the knife upon the ground, he assisted her to her feet. At that moment an altercation arose between two of the Indians, and the outlaw left the young woman's side to quell the disturbance. As he turned his back, the quick-witted French girl seized the dagger he had dropped and secreted it in her bosom.

When he rejoined her, he did not miss the dagger from his belt and made no inquiries.

"You look hungry and weary," were his first words. "Sit down upon this rock; I want to talk to you while they're cooking dinner."

She obeyed. He seated himself beside her and went on:

"You're my prisoner — you understand that?"

"I understand," she replied, in a tone that was hardly audible.

"Very well. As you're my prisoner, I can do with you as I wish. I can have you tortured and killed, or petted and pampered, at my will. I've tried to use you first rate thus far; and I'm going to use you better still — provided you're sensible. Unless you make a foolish attempt to escape, I shan't again bind your limbs. Let me bring you something to eat."

He went to the fire, around which the Indians were grouped, and procured for her a quantity of the stolen bread and broiled meat. Then, rejoining the savages, he gorged himself with half-cooked food, washing it down with copious draughts of

fiery liquor from a large flask he carried in his hunting shirt.

After resting for an hour, the party again took up the line of march. The outlaw, as he placed Marie upon the litter, leered at her in half-drunken fashion and whispered:

"I'm pretty good to you, eh? See how I've dried your wet nest for you. You couldn't give me a sweet kiss, could you?"

She drew back in terror, and would have leaped to the ground, but he caught her and held her in place.

"There, there! None of that!" he laughed coarsely. "I don't mean to force my attentions upon you. You can't learn to love me all at once — but you'll come around all right in time."

Marie trembled with fear and disgust.

The Indian band followed the course of the creek they had crossed, bearing to the east as they advanced, and came out into the valley of the Muskingum, a few miles below the present city of Zanesville. Here, at the peril of their lives, they crossed upon the rotten ice that was ready at any moment to start upon its voyage down the river. Reaching the eastern bank, they climbed the precipitous hillside, and pushed onward through the fast darkening forest. At nightfall they went into camp under the shelter of an overhanging cliff, upon the bank of a brawling brook.

Marie was worn out and would have lain down to

rest at once, but the outlaw insisted that she should wait and eat something. After supper he spread her couch for her and, sitting down beside her, began:

"Now, my pretty jade, we're going to have a little chat. Nothing like it to while away the tedious hours, eh?"

The poor girl noted that he had been drinking heavily, and her heart palpitated with alarm. The Delawares were stretched in various attitudes around the camp fire a few yards distant, and she and the renegade were practically alone. His breath, heavy with liquor, sickened and disgusted her. She wished sincerely that her place of rest were closer to the camp-fire. The savage redmen were less to be feared than the brutal white at her side.

"Please leave me," she pleaded; "I am weary — I do not desire to talk."

"Don't care to talk, eh?" he sneered. "I've been too kind to you. You need taking down a peg. Do you know why I led the redskins against the settlement at Big Bottom?"

"No."

"To get hold of you — that's why. And do you know why I wanted to carry you off?"

"I do not," she replied, turning away her face.

"Hold on!" he cried, roughly. "None of your coyness with me. You'll find me gentle enough if you don't cross me; but if you do, look out! No

surliness, miss! There, that's better; now I'll go on. I kidnaped you because a woman hired me to do it. Wine and women will cause the most upright man to veer from the straight and narrow way, you know." And again he laughed a coarse, brutal laugh that had in it little of mirth.

Marie was interested in spite of herself. Was the outlaw telling the truth? Had he been hired to kidnap her? Like a flash of light, the truth came to her. Turning upon her companion, she cried scornfully:

"And you massacred innocent people for gold!"

"Hello!" he chuckled. "You're getting on your dignity. I didn't know those blue eyes could flash fire in that way. By zounds! but you're beautiful — beautiful as an angel! I'm madly in love with you —"

"Stop!" she cried imperiously, "I will not hear such talk from you. You insult me!"

She made a fine show of bold indignation; although inwardly trembling with fear. For the moment he was deceived.

"What a she catamount you are," he replied with an amused grin —"all teeth and claws! But I'll keep my distance — for the present at least." And the corners of his sensual mouth twitched. He continued:

"You asked me a question. Yes, I led my Delaware and Wyandot hounds down to Big Bottom, and let them lap blood. I did it because I wanted

the riches that had been promised me, for carrying you into captivity. Do you know who's to pay the bill?"

"Hester Lovelace," was the quiet reply.

"Ah! I've revealed no secret, then; so much the better. Yes, it's Hester Lovelace. She wanted revenge and so did I. Your coxcomb of a lover, Paul Graydon, jilted Miss Hester and gave me a sound trouncing. We thirsted for revenge. I planned to carry you into captivity; she agreed to pay me for doing the job — besides, she promised to marry me and share her estate with me. Ha, ha! It's wonderful what a fascination I exercise over the fair sex. I'm irresistible — eh?"

Again he leered at Marie, in maudlin fashion. She did not deign to notice him; and he resumed:

"The job was a success; you're in my power and Mr. Paul Graydon is disconsolate. He knows nothing of your whereabouts. The redskins call me Red Fox; and the name's not a bad one. I *am* sly. Your lover will track the Wyandots to the Maumee — and get killed for his pains, probably. At any rate, he'll not find *you* there. Then he'll retrace his steps to Marietta; and abandon the quest. Oh! I'm a sly old fox; I planned it all beforehand."

He complacently rubbed his hands and chuckled. He knew he was inflicting exquisite torture; and he enjoyed it. He went on:

"You don't appear to be in a mood for talking. Very well, I must talk the more. As I said, Miss

Lovelace promised to marry me and share with me the family fortune. But since I've been in your sweet society, I've made up my mind I don't care to enter the married relation with the enchanting Hester — with all her lands and gold. I've fallen head-over-ears in love with you, my woodland sprite; and you shall be my squaw and keep my lodge in order. What have you to say?"

He leaned forward as he finished speaking and attempted to take her in his arms. With a cry, she sprang to her feet and thrust her hand into her bosom. Crazed with liquor and unbridled passion, he staggered toward her, attempting to fling his arms around her waist.

"Back!" she screamed shrilly, "back, or take the consequences!"

He laughed recklessly, but did not pause. A bright object flashed in the faint light of the dying campfire; and, with a hoarse howl of rage and pain, Red Wallace fell backward and rolled down the bank into the noisy brook. Marie slipped away in the darkness. Over rocks and fallen logs, through briers and brambles, she ran. The curses of the renegade and the confused babel of voices in the Delaware tongue followed her, and lent energy to her lithe limbs. She climbed the ridge that skirted the deep, narrow valley; and paused to ease her labored breathing and listen for sounds of pursuit. The heavens were overcast and the darkness was intense. A few large drops of rain began to patter

upon the dead leaves. Faintly there came to her strained sense of hearing, the indistinct murmur of human accents; and, far below her, she saw the glimmer of torches, dancing to and fro like will-o'-the-wisps.

"They are searching for me," she panted; "soon they'll be upon my trail. I must hasten — I must escape! Where shall I go — what shall I do? It matters little; better to be devoured by wild beasts than to return to that man's loathsome presence! I wonder if I wounded him seriously. Hark! they are shouting in triumph; they have found my foot-prints. May God protect and help me!"

In the darkness of the rainy night, she had no idea of direction. To escape from the dreaded presence of Red Wallace was her one thought. She blundered blindly forward, lacerating the delicate skin of her hands and face and tearing her garments to tatters. The rain fell in torrents; and the wind, in fitful gusts and swirls, sobbed through the leafless trees. From her disheveled hair and saturated garments clinging to her, the water ran in streams. How long she heedlessly hurried onward she never knew. Exhausted at last, she staggered into the shelter of a friendly ledge of rocks and fell upon the ground.

When she awoke, the sun was shining into her upturned face. She attempted to rise, but fell back with a groan. Her limbs were stiff and swollen, and her muscles ached excruciatingly. After re-

peated trials, she rose and, with halting, dragging footsteps, left the shelter where she had slept, and sought a drink of water.

The storm of the night before had cleared the sky and rendered the air pure and sweet. The sun shone brightly, and the day was warm for the season. As she sat drying her torn garments in the sunshine, she realized her desperate condition and burst into tears. What was to become of her, without food and shelter, unprotected and helpless? She knew that she was many miles from civilization, and she had no idea in what direction the nearest settlement lay. She dried her eyes at last and began to follow the course of the stream, hoping it would lead to the Muskingum.

She trudged down the stream until she was weak from hunger and exertion. Then she lay down upon a bed of dead leaves, to regain strength for further effort. While lying there, she noted the position of the sun, and concluded that the brook she had been following flowed eastward.

"If it does, it cannot be a branch of the Muskingum," she mused. "I'll climb to the top of the hill and look around me."

She carried her resolve into execution; a billowy expanse of forest alone met her gaze. She returned to the lowland and again followed the stream. The little valley grew wider and soon opened into a larger one. Hope lent her courage and strength. Hour

after hour she toiled onward. The sun sank low and disappeared. Night came on. She sought a sheltered place among some fallen treetops, and, breathing a fervent prayer for protection and succor, lay down to sleep, covering herself with dead leaves that had drifted in heaps around the gnarled and twisted limbs. Poor deluded girl! She did not know that she had wandered in a circle, and that she was not five miles from the spot where Red Wallace had made his camp the night before. Thinking of Paul, she fell asleep, her flushed cheeks bathed in tears.

She awoke with a start. Where was she? Ah! she remembered all. She had dreamed she heard a child screaming. Was it but a dream? No! she heard it again — and she was fully awake. Could it be that she was close to a settlement? She sprang to her feet, and listened intently. The sound was repeated, closer than before. Her heart almost stopped its beating, as she recognized the sound. It was the scream of a panther!

She stood like one petrified. The beast was following her trail. Flight would not avail her. The sounds drew nearer. The stars and sickle-shaped moon dimly lighted the forest. She heard the dead leaves rustle to the animal's cat-like tread, and saw two balls of fire moving toward her. Half-fascinated, she watched them. The dark body creeping along the ground came nearer. She tried to cry

out, but could not. The panther was crouching for a spring. What was that sound behind her? Why did the animal hesitate and snarl?

CHAPTER XXVI

It was a hundred miles from Big Bottom to the hunting camp of the Delawares and Wyandots, upon the Tuscarawas. The best and shortest route was along the eastern bank of the Muskingum, for about thirty-five miles, and thence across the hills in a northeast direction. This route Silverheels determined to follow. Noting that the ice in the river was becoming soft and treacherous, the three pursuers did not cross to the Shawnee's lodge; but spent the night in the upper cabin at Big Bottom. At daybreak they set out upon the trail. Silverheels led, with the long, swinging stride peculiar to Indians and backwoodsmen. Hour after hour he kept up the rapid pace — which was in reality a half-trot — never pausing, except to quench his thirst or to seek a ford across some stream.

"Dat Silberheels am a ginnywine race-hoss, he am, Marse Paul," Gumbo remarked, as, puffing and perspiring, he brought up the rear. "Guess he tinks we's gwine cl'ar froo to de norf pole in one day, widout eatin' 'r sleepin'. 'Deed if dis nigger can hol' out dis way much longer. Whew! I's mos' mightily discommoded, I is; 'spect I's gwine to go into tantrums 'fo' long, if dat Injin debil doesn't promulgate de extrabagance ob his rapidity."

"Come on," Paul answered, without looking back; "we can't go too fast. I am in a fever to overtake the Indians."

"An' *I's* in a feber, too," Gumbo replied. "I's b'ilin' an' roastin' dis berry minute. Doesn't see no use in prospectin' de whole distance to de Injin camp in one fo'noon — I doesn't."

Silverheels overheard a part of the negro's remarks, and, with a grim smile upon his bronze countenance, led on faster than before. An hour after midday, he came to a sudden halt, and, throwing himself at full length upon the damp earth, grunted:

"Let us rest and eat. Here the Delawares crossed the Moose Eye."

As has been stated in the preceding chapter, the day was warm and sunshiny. The river was full of floating ice, that rolled over and over in the turbulent water and ground along the shore, until the ear pulsated with the vibrant roar. Paul could discover no reason for the Shawnee's confident assertion that Red Wallace and his band had crosssed the stream at that point, and so expressed himself.

He said: "It's well that we should stop to rest and eat. I'm both tired and hungry — and I believe I may truthfully say the same of Gumbo — "

"'Deed an' you may, Marse Paul!" the black interrupted. "If dar eber was an eggshosted an' kerflummixed nigger, I's dat chile."

"But," Paul resumed, without heeding the darky's interruption, "what have you seen that warrants you in saying the Delawares crossed the river here?"

Silverheels replied briefly: "Many moccasin tracks — broken twigs."

"Where?" Paul inquired.

Silverheels arose to a sitting posture and pointed to the soft, damp sod along the river bank.

Graydon carefully examined the place indicated, but could discover no signs showing that the Delawares had come ashore at that point. He saw a number of shallow indentations in the wet turf and a few disturbed and broken twigs among the dead willows. That was all. However, he acknowledged that the Shawnee was a skillful and experienced woodman; and he did not doubt his positive statement.

The three men ate some dried meat and cornbread the Indian took from the pouch that hung at his side; and, after resting and dozing for a half hour, took up the trail across the hills. Silverheels appeared to follow the footprints of his ancient foes instinctively. With bent head he trotted onward, never speaking except when addressed — and then answering in monosyllables. At sunset they arrived at the Delaware camp of the previous night.

While examining the place, the Shawnee started and uttered the guttural exclamation:

"Fight! Blood! Red Fox hurt."

"What do you say?" Paul asked excitedly.

"Blood — see?" And Silverheels pointed to some rust-colored spots upon the stones and fallen leaves.

"An' dar's a whole puddle ob it, on dat flat rock by de ashes ob de fire," Gumbo cried, with bulging eyeballs; "dey mus' ob had an obstropperous scrimmage, Marse Paul."

"No doubt it's the blood of some animal," Paul replied.

The Shawnee shook his head and continued to carefully inspect the ground. When he had finished, he stood with folded arms, gazing up the steep hillside in front of him.

"What do you make of it all?" Paul inquired.

The Shawnee did not answer at once; and the young Englishman asked:

"Is this the stain of human blood?"

"Ugh! It is the blood of Red Fox."

"How do you know?"

Silverheels showed his white brother the trail made by the outlaw as he slid down the little declivity, the blood drops upon the stones, and the puddle upon the flat rock by the ashes of the campfire; and replied:

"White Eagle, this is blood — the blood of a paleface, the blood of Red Fox. And here is a bunch of red hair that was torn from his head, as he slid down the bank."

"But," Paul insisted, "there are no blood drops by the brookside, where he must have fallen."

The Shawnee answered promptly: "My white brother forgets that it rained last night. The water has washed away the blood drops that fell upon the pebbles by the brook. Under the shelter of the overhanging cliff, we find them still."

"True!" Paul cried, eagerly. "Was he killed?"

"He was wounded," was the positive answer; "the Delaware squaws led the Red Fox away."

"The Delawares did not wound him?" Graydon returned, in great surprise.

"No."

"Who, then, did it?"

"The blue-eyed maiden."

"Marie?"

"Ugh!"

"And — and —"

"And she escaped in the darkness," the redman completed.

"T'ank de good Lo'd fo' dat!" Gumbo murmured fervently. "It's bes' fo' de purty little gal to be out in de woods, 'among de b'ars an' catymounts, dan to be discredited to 'sociate wid dat ripscalawag ob a runnygate. Kiyi!" — he shouted ecstatically — "bet she jes jerked de big knife outen his belt an' slashed him a cut! He's been 'dulgin' in some ob his 'nsultin' an' scandalous talk — an' de purty little gal wouldn't done stan' nuffin' ob dat kin'!"

"Stop!" Paul cried sharply. Then, turning to Silverheels, he inquired:

"You're certain that she has escaped?"

The Shawnee nodded vigorously.

"Unaided and alone?"

"The blue-eyed maiden was alone."

"And have the Delawares followed her?"

Silverheels did not remove his gaze from the hillside, as he answered:

"The Delaware squaws did not follow her up the steep hillside. The Red Fox was sorely wounded, and they bore him away up the valley. They could not climb the hill with him in their arms."

"Do you think they have gone on to their hunting-camp and left Marie to her fate?"

The Indian shook his head.

"Then what *have* they done?"

"They have gone into camp near by, and are scouring the woods for her. The Delawares are squaws, but they are not fools."

"Oh! then let's hasten to overtake her ere they recover her," the young man cried with a sob in his voice; "I cannot bear the thought of her being recaptured. My darling! To what straits she must have been driven — forced to fight for her life, perhaps! The thought drives me to the verge of madness. And what may be her condition at this moment! Alone in the forest — without food, shelter, or protection from savage beasts and still more savage men. I cannot stand here, my red brother; let's be off."

"The Shawnee is ready," came the guttural reply from the bronze statue. "But he can follow the

blue-eyed maiden's trail but a short distance, ere the black bird of night drops his feathers upon it. Silverheels is ready. Come!"

Up the steep hillside and along the narrow ridge, they proceeded. Above them the great trees interlocked their bare arms to shut out the last faint rays of the twilight; and around them the nimble shadows flitted silently. The rain of the night before had obliterated almost every trace of Marie's footprints. Paul and Gumbo could discover no tracks at all; but Silverheels instinctively followed the trail, seldom hesitating or pausing. To him, a leaf pressed into the earth — a misplaced stone — was sufficient; and he moved onward, his body bent forward and his eyes close to the ground.

"Marse Paul, dat Shawnee mus' *smell* out de track, like a foxhoun'," Gumbo remarked as he stumbled along in the rear; "kase I doesn't see nuffin' 'tall to tell dat de purty little gal's been 'long here."

The negro was breathing heavily from the unusual exertion of carrying his rifle and a haunch of venison, that he had cut from a fine doe Paul had killed early in the afternoon. The three men descended the long ridge, doubled upon their trail, and came to the opening in the rocks where Marie had spent the preceding night. With a grunt of astonishment, Silverheels came to a sudden halt.

"What is it?" Paul inquired.

By this time it was quite dusk in the glen where

they stood. The huge rocks loomed in somber piles, above and around them; and the little rivulet at their feet fretfully complained of its hard lot. The whir of an owl sounded overhead; the howl of a lone wolf echoed far away upon the hilltops. It was an eerie place and an eerie hour. The negro glanced around and shivered. Paul drew closer to the Indian and repeated the question: "What is it?"

"Here the blue-eyed maiden spent the night; and here the Delawares came upon her trail," was the Shawnee's reply.

"Then we are too late!" the young man groaned, as he dejectedly seated himself upon the ground and bowed his head.

"Hab dem cowardish red debils got de purty little gal ag'in?" Gumbo asked.

"No," Paul replied, "but they *will* have her before we can overtake her."

Silverheels turned upon the speaker and said severely:

"Is my white brother a child, that he gives up so easily? The Delawares are upon the trail of the paleface maiden; so is Silverheels. Are the Delaware squaws better woodmen than the Shawnee?"

"No — no!" Paul replied quickly. "You misunderstand me, my red brother; I'm disappointed but not discouraged. I know we shall recover my sweetheart at last — I've all faith in you. But, I

hoped to find her ere nightfall. It's maddening to think of her alone and helpless a second night in the woods. Can you follow her footsteps farther to-night?"

"The Shawnee has not the eyes of the owl nor the nose of the panther; he will wait until morning," Silverheels replied quietly.

"Very well, then I must be patient," Graydon returned resolutely: "Let's eat our suppers and lie down to rest."

They built a fire, and upon a bed of red coals broiled a part of the venison. This, with some cold cornbread that remained in the Shawnee's pouch, constituted their evening meal. Supper over, on a bed of brush and dried leaves, under the overhanging rocks, they stretched themselves to rest; and soon they slept.

Two hours passed. Gumbo awoke, softly caught up his rifle that lay at his side, and arose. Carefully guarding his footsteps, he left his sleeping companions and stole down the glen. When a short distance away, he stopped and muttered:

"Mo' dan likely dis am a wil' goose chase; but den I's gwine to do it anyhow. Ol' Gumbo couldn't lay dar an' hear de words — 'He'p, my Paul — he'p, Gumbo!' all froo de night. Maybe dis nigger was dreamin'; but if he was, it was de mos' natur'l an' edifyin' dream he eber had — dat's all. I b'liebs dat de purty little gal am close 'round' dese parts, an' dat she's in danger; an' I's gwine to fin' out de troof.

'T wan't no use to wake up Marse Paul an' tell him 'bout it; kase he'd called me a silly nigger an' tol' me to go to sleep. An' as fer dat Silberheels, dem wicked an' dare-debilish eyes ob his gibs dis nigger a hot chill, dat's a right-down fack. I's gwine up to de top ob dis hill an' look ober in de nex' holler. De dream showed me de purty little gal 'mong a lot ob brush in a big holler."

Reaching the top of the high ridge, he stopped to listen. There was more light on the hilltop than in the glen; and the sentinel tree trunks were distinctly outlined. Nothing out of the ordinary was visible; and he was on the point of retracing his footsteps, when a sound reached his quick ears, that glued him to the spot. A cry — half fierce, half plaintive — floated up from the deep, broad valley before him. He waited a few seconds. It was repeated. He gripped his rifle and bounded down the descent that led to the valley, muttering as he went:

"Dat's de scream ob a painter, an' he's trackin' somefin. Maybe it's the purty little gal!"

He did not check his headlong speed, until he reached the valley and stood beside the stream. Then he listened again for the cry. It came distinctly.

"Jes a little furder up de branch," he said to himself as he started off at full speed; "an' it's gittin' closer to its prey all de time."

He leaped over innumerable obstructions in the way of logs and rocks; splashed through a shallow

place in the stream; veered from his course to avoid a thicket of vines and brambles; and stood still, panting and wildly peering around him. Fifty yards from him lay a fallen treetop; and among the branches he thought he discerned a moving figure. Cautiously he crept forward. The outline grew more distinct. He saw it was a human being, a woman. Her back was toward him; but he knew her. It was Marie! Her gaze was fixed upon some object in front of her. Gumbo heard a rustling of the dead leaves, and caught sight of a cat-like form and two fiery eyes. At the same time, the animal became aware of the newcomer's presence, and snarled. The light was dim and uncertain, but Gumbo took quick aim and fired. The lithe animal sprang into the air and fell back dead. The negro had shot it through the brain. Marie screamed in affright, staggered backward, and would have fallen had Gumbo not caught her in his arms. The intense strain had been too much for her; she had fainted. Bending over her, the black tenderly chafed her hands and murmured softly:

"Purty little gal! Jes wore out wid traipsin' froo de woods an' cryin' fo' Marse Paul! She ain't dead — I can feel her breavin' on my hand. She'll come to purty soon, an' den I'll take 'er right straight to de camp. Oh! Miss M'rie, wake up, honey! De painter's dead; he can't skeer you no mo'. Wake up, honey!"

He brought some water in the hollow of his hands

and dashed it into her upturned face. Presently she heaved a deep sigh and opened her blue eyes.

"Jes lay still, Miss M'rie," he said, soothingly; "dar's nuffin' gwine to hurt you no mo' — de painter's dead. Jes res' a little minute, an' den you'll be equiliberated an' feelin' firs' trate."

Marie stared hard at the black face hovering over her and interrogated faintly:

"Who are you — where am I?"

"Doesn't you know me, Miss M'rie — doesn't you know ol' Gumbo?" he asked quickly and anxiously.

"Yes, Gumbo," she replied, "but where am I?"

"Right here in de woods, honey. Doesn't you recomember dat de painter was gwine to eat you all up?"

"Yes — yes!" — and she shuddered — "I remember everything now. How came you here?"

"Jes come to fin' you, honey — dat's how. W'en you's rested a little mite, I's gwine to take you to Silberheels an' Marse Paul — "

"Paul! My Paul?"

"Yes, Miss M'rie; Silberheels and Marse Paul is camped — "

"Where?"

"Ober in de nex' holler."

"You three were searching for me?"

"Yes, honey."

"How came you here alone, just when I needed you most?"

"Well, dis nigger went to sleep wid Silberheels an' Marse Paul by de campfire. Den he dreamp' — I 'spose it was a dream — dat you was in a peck ob trouble an' calamitatin' diffikilty, an' dat you was callin' all de time fo' Marse Paul an' ol' Gumbo. Dis darky couldn't stan' dat, nohow, honey; he couldn't sleep, an' he jes' slipped away an' come ober in dis big holler to hunt you. W'en he got onto de top ob de hill, he heerd de painter — an' knowed w'at it meant. He got here jes in time — but you's all right now, Miss M'rie. Does you t'ink you's able to stan' upon yo' feet an' perambulate to de camp?"

"Yes, let's go at once," was her quiet but determined reply.

He put his brawny arms around her and raised her to her feet. Pale and trembling, she stood alone and essayed to walk. Gumbo retained a firm hold upon her arm and assisted her to make the uncertain trial. They proceeded slowly, and had reached the base of the steep hill, when Marie insisted that she must rest. At that moment the darky caught sight of a shadowy figure, as it dodged behind a tree trunk. Then he discerned another a little farther off.

"Am dat you, Marse Paul?" he called in a cautious tone. He received no reply; and an unwelcome fear assailed him.

"Did you see some one?" Marie asked, as she clung to him, trembling.

Without heeding the young woman's question, Gumbo cried in a louder voice:

"Silberheels, am dat you?"

The answer to his question was a chorus of fierce and fiendish yells. He saw Indians surrounding him and Marie; and the noble fellow clubbed his empty rifle and prepared to defend his helpless charge.

With the cry — "It's the Delawares!" — Marie sank upon the ground, in a helpless, half-fainting condition.

There were seven or eight of the redmen. Evidently they did not wish to kill either the girl or the black. They did not fire upon them, but rushed in. Gumbo swung his clubbed rifle right and left. He shouted the name of Paul and Silverheels, until the dim arches of the forest rang. Two of the braves snatched Marie from the ground and bore her away. The rifle was wrenched from the negro's hands; and a blow stretched him bleeding and senseless upon the ground. He was bound and made a prisoner.

CHAPTER XXVII

WHEN Gumbo regained consciousness it was still dark. As in a dream, he perceived the half-nude forms of the Indians stretched around a camp-fire and heard their stertorious breathing. His head ached, and his teeth began to chatter. The positions of the stars and moon told him the night was far advanced. Midway between himself and the camp-fire, he saw Marie. She was half reclining upon the bare ground, at the foot of a small tree, to which she was bound. Her head rested upon her breast and her rhythmic respirations indicated that she slept.

"Dey's took us bofe pris'ners," the darky muttered to himself, as he vainly strove to control his chattering jaws.

"De night's mighty col', too; I's right down glad, I is, dat dey put de purty little gal close to de fire. De kidnaperin' Injin debils ought to git her somefin' to lay on — she'll be likely to ketch 'er def ob col'. Purty little gal! Ol' Gumbo couldn't sabe you — it's a right down scrutinizin' shame! I wonder whar we is; I doesn't recognize de surroundin's ob de situation. Ouch! Dis nigger's head's a-hurtin' right smart — 'deed an' dat's a fack! Dey mus' ob knocked all de senses out ob ol' Gumbo."

He made an attempt to raise his hand, but found his arms pinioned behind him and made fast to a stake. As he tried to disengage them, the cruel thongs cut into his flesh. He groaned with pain.

"Dis am a nice fix fo' a free nigger to be in!" he grumbled. "If I eber gits back to ol' Virginny I'll stay dar — dat I will. Who's dat wrapped an' rolled up in dem furs an' fixin's ober dar by dat log? Fo' de Lo'd's sake! If it isn't dat Red Wallace, I's a numbskullion! He's got Miss M'rie an' me bofe. I's a dead nigger, fo' sure, dis time!"

He shifted his position as best he could, rearranged his swollen and stiffened limbs to the extent that his bonds would allow, and, still mumbling of the cold, the Indians and the outlaw, fell into a fitful sleep. It was break of day when he again awoke. The Indians had replenished the campfire, and were moving to and fro around it as they prepared breakfast. Marie was awake, but listlessly maintained her half reclining position. Seated upon a log on the side of the fire opposite the negro, was Red Wallace, his shivering form wrapped in heavy quilts and robes — a part of the blockhouse plunder — and his neck and the upper part of his chest swathed in bloody bandages.

A wonderful change in the appearance of the rugged renegade had taken place. His ruddiness was gone, and his flabby features and rough hands were yellowish, waxen — the effect of excessive hemorrhage. Dark lines encircled his eyes, in which

the fire of latent fever burned; and his thick and sensual lips were dry and parched. He sat moodily gazing into the fire, until he noticed that Gumbo was awake. Then he arose feebly and came over to where the negro lay. He stood looking down upon the prostrate man for a full half minute, as though striving to gain control of himself. At last he said in a husky voice that was little more than a strident whisper:

"Hello, nigger! You're awake, are you?"

Gumbo nodded but said nothing.

"Do you recognize me?" was the outlaw's next question.

Again the negro nodded.

"Open your big mouth and let your voice out!" Wallace commanded. "Who am I?"

"You's de man dat I put 'pon his back on de las' Fo'th ob July," Gumbo replied with provoking coolness.

"I'm glad to see you remember me so well," the renegade returned with equal calmness. "I've got you in my power now — got you where Mr. Paul Graydon can't interfere — and I'll take sweet revenge. Yes, you put me upon my back, and you caused me to get a thorough drubbing at the hands of that young upstart. You shall receive your reward, never fear. My Delaware hounds will teach you to run the gauntlet. Oh, it's fine sport!"

Red Wallace chuckled hoarsely, but the act brought on an attack of coughing that threatened to

strangle him. He spat upon the ground and the mucus was streaked with blood. Wiping his mouth with the back of his hand he resumed:

"You see the condition I'm in — stabbed through the top of the lung by that she wildcat over there. I'm liable to die at any moment, I suppose. No matter, a man must die some time. At any rate, I mean to live long enough to pay off all old scores. You and the young jade shan't be forgotten when I parcel out my rewards! What are you doing here, you black scoundrel?"

"I isn't doin' nuffin'," Gumbo replied, truthfully. "I's bucked, an' gagged, an' tied, till I *can't* do nuffin'. 'Deed an' dat's de solemn troof!"

"What did you come here for?"

"I didn't come; de Injun debils brunged me."

"What were you doing in the woods when they caught you?"

"Killin' painters an' fightin' red debbils."

"You've got a funny streak, eh?" Wallace cried in cracked tones. "Never mind, I'll take all that out of you. Answer my question, or I'll roast you over a slow fire. How did you find the girl?"

"Doesn't know, Marse Wallace; guess de good Lo'd done gone showed dis ol' nigger whar de purty little gal was."

"You were hunting her?"

"Yes, sah."

"How did you know she was a captive?"

Gumbo was silent.

"Answer me!" the outlaw squeaked, attempting to elevate his voice. The effort was a failure, and brought on another attack of coughing. He repressed it, and stood holding his throat and panting. Presently he whispered with difficulty:

"It won't do for me to get excited, that's plain. Now, you've got to answer my questions, nigger; if you don't, the consequences will be upon your own head. Who was with you — who led you upon my trail?"

Gumbo knew the salvation of Marie and himself depended upon the efforts of Paul and Silverheels. He knew, also, that should Red Wallace become assured the two men were upon his trail, he would take additional precautions to defeat them. The negro set his teeth and resolved to undergo any form of torment rather than reveal his secret. Wallace dealt the bound and helpless black a brutal kick and repeated his questions.

"Out with it!" he insisted, emphasizing his commands with a series of kicks and cuffs. But the blows lacked vigor; and, although the negro squirmed and strained at his bonds until the blood dropped from his lacerated wrists, he was not seriously injured.

"Jes' cut dees cords an' let me loose, an' I'll show you *how* to kick!" Gumbo shouted. "You's a mean, cowardly Red Fox — dat's w'at you is — to 'buse a man w'en he's down an' can't he'p hisse'f. Jes' let dis nigger loose, an' *he'll* show you!"

"Will you answer my question?" Wallace inquired.

"'Deed an' I *won't!*" was the sturdy reply.

The outlaw's anger was rising, and he was on the point of giving way to a hurricane of rage; but the distressing cough gave him warning, and by a great effort, he regained control of himself. With a cynical and cadaverous smile, he turned away muttering:

"It won't do — I've got to control myself. It's devilish hard to do, though. Bah! What a fool I am to bandy words with a nigger. The fact that he refuses to answer my questions is proof that there are others upon my trail. Besides, how could an idiotic nigger follow my trail? He couldn't follow the track of a whirlwind through a cornfield! I should like to know who they are, and how many there are. One thing's certain — their leader's skilled in woodcraft. Is Paul Graydon among the number? What was the nigger doing away from the others — and how did he find the girl? I must push on rapidly. Once at the camp upon the Tuscarawas, I can snap my fingers at them. I'll have a little palaver with the girl before we start. Curse this wound! It's liable to give me no end of trouble, right at a time when I need all my strength and cunning."

With dragging steps he went to the campfire, and carried some food to Marie. He unbound her limbs, and handed her what he had brought. She had

fasted for thirty-six hours and was half famished. Red Wallace seated himself a short distance from her, and silently choked down his own breakfast. In the meantime, one of the Delawares had loosened Gumbo's hands and supplied him with meat and water.

When the French girl had finished her meal, the outlaw arose and asked:

"Do you feel better now, my lively wench?"

Receiving a murmured reply in the affirmative, he continued:

"Like myself, you look a little the worse for wear. You played the mischief with me when you gave me that murderous thrust. I thought for a little while I had received my death wound."

"I'm very sorry," the girl said languidly, "that I was forced to injure you. But you were to blame. I shouldn't have stabbed you, had you kept your distance."

"I'll take care not to come within reach of your claws again. Where did you get the knife?"

"It was your own."

"How did it come into your possession?"

"You dropped it and I picked it up. God is on the side of the weak and defenseless! He saved me from your power, and He will do so again."

The renegade started and exclaimed with an oath: "Stop your clack! It makes me creepy to hear such talk. Look at me! Two days ago I was a strong man; today I'm a staggering wreck. I can

scarcely talk or breathe. Do you imagine I'll forget that you brought me to such a condition?"

Marie arose to stretch her cramped limbs, as she answered:

"I'm not to blame; you brought your injury upon yourself."

"Nevertheless, my fine jade, you shall pay for it!" he said, with his hand pressed to his chest and a look of suffering upon his face. "Just wait till I get you to the village — till I'm strong again! You shall learn what Indian torture is. I intended to be kind to you — and this is my reward. Where's that knife?"

Marie did not reply.

"Give it to me!" He started toward her.

Her hand flew to her bosom and a dangerous light flashed in her blue eyes.

He stopped, turned toward the Indians and gave a low command. Two of the braves came up to Marie and the outlaw. One quietly slipped behind her, and pinioned her arms to her side, while the other assisted Wallace in his search for the weapon. However, they did not find it; and, with a string of oaths, the renegade left the girl and ordered the march to begin. When they had turned their backs, Marie recovered the dagger from the leaves at her feet and restored it to its place in her bosom.

The Indians again bound Gumbo's arms, strapped upon his back a part of the plunder they had with them, and fastened around his neck a cord by which

one of their number led him. No restraint — except the restraining influence of the eyes of the watchful braves — was placed upon Marie's movements. But she was compelled to walk, while the injured outlaw was borne upon the litter.

An hour after they had resumed their journey, the air grew warmer and damper and blue-gray clouds began to pile up in the northwestern heavens. Soon a snowstorm was upon them. For hour after hour, the great flakes fell silently. They blotted out the trail left by the little party, and lay several inches deep throughout the never-ending woodland. The walking became slavish. Uncomplainingly Marie trudged onward, until ready to fall from exhaustion. Gumbo noted her condition and appealed to the renegade.

"Jes' untie my han's an' let me he'p de purty little gal ober de steep and rough places, Marse Wallace," he pleaded.

But the outlaw gave no heed to the negro's plea; and Marie struggled forward as best she could. At last she could go no further. Her bruised and chilled limbs refused to support her, and she stumbled and fell. She essayed to arise; but her strength was not equal to the effort.

"None of that — none of your tricks, my pretty minx!" Red Wallace cried, huskily. "Get up and come on, or I'll order the Delawares to prick you with their knives. I understand your motive; you want to delay us. Get up, I say!"

The poor girl attempted to obey, but with a groan fell back upon the snow.

"Fo! de sake ob de good Lo'd dat made us all," sobbed Gumbo, the tears trickling down his ebony cheeks, "cut me loose an' let me he'p 'er! Doesn't you see dat she's done gib out, Marse Wallace? Please let ol' Gumbo he'p her! He'll take 'er 'pon his back — he will."

"Very well, have your will," Wallace replied weakly. The jolting of his vehicle was telling upon him, and he coughed almost incessantly. His head ached violently; and he sweat and shivered by turns. He ordered the Indians to unloose Gumbo's arms, and, with a moan of agony, dropped back upon the litter. The stalwart black hastened to the young womans' side, placed a muscular arm round her and lifted her to her feet. Again they moved onward, Gumbo half leading, half carrying the exhausted girl. When her strength threatened to fail her entirely, he took her in his arms and carried her for mile after mile.

At the close of the following day — after untold toil, hardship and suffering — the party arrived at the village upon the Tuscarawas.

CHAPTER XXVIII

CHILL, murky daylight, with many sinuous motions, crept into the woodland. Soft-footed as were its movements, it aroused the Shawnee. Paul, exhausted by the preceding day's journey, was still sleeping heavily. With a grunt of surprise, Silverheels arose to his feet and walked over to the spot where Gumbo had lain down to sleep. The Indian carefully examined the place and with bent head, slowly encircled the camp. Then he picked up his rifle and glided down the glen. In fifteen minutes he returned to find his white companion still in the land of dreams. A light touch, and the young man sprang to his feet, rifle in hand.

"The night is gone; the day is here," said the Indian.

"Where's Gumbo?" the young Englishman asked, glancing around the camp in a puzzled manner.

"The black man is gone."

"Gone?"

"Ugh!"

"Where? When?"

Silverheels shook his head. "The Shawnee awoke to find him gone. His tracks lead down the glen."

"He hasn't gone far — he'll be back soon," Paul confidently asserted. "Let's prepare our breakfast. I'm anxious to start again."

To this Silverheels made no reply. The two replenished their fire and, in silence, prepared their morning meal; but Gumbo came not.

"What can it mean?" Paul asked of Silverheels.

"The black man is far away," was the stolid rejoinder.

"Do you think he has been gone long?"

"Many hours."

"Have you any explanation to offer?"

The Indian shook his head.

"It's all very perplexing — and provoking," Paul said in an irritated tone. "Just when we should be starting! When the loss of an hour may mean so much — the heedless black must lose himself in the woods. What can have happened to call him away? However, there's no use to waste time in idle fretting; let's eat. If he doesn't come, we must search for him. It will not do to go off and leave him."

When their primitive meal was finished, Paul said briskly:

"You say his steps lead down the glen?"

"Ugh!"

"Let's follow him."

Down the glen and over the hill they went. At the place where Gumbo had shot the panther, Silverheels stopped suddenly and carefully scrutinized every inch of the ground.

"Why, what's this?" Graydon cried as he stumbled over the carcass of the dead catamount.

Silverheels came forward and looked at the body of the animal, but offered no reply as he proceeeded with his examination of the soft earth at his feet. Paul grew impatient and uttered the one word:

"Well?"

"Would my white brother know what has happened?"

"Certainly."

"Then let him be patient until the Shawnee's tongue is heavy with the truth. Silverheels would not speak lies."

Thus rebuked, the young man dropped upon the dry leaves and nervously awaited the other's decision. The Indian continued his careful scrutiny of the spot for some minutes. At last he said slowly and impressively:

"The black man is wiser than Silverheels or White Eagle. In the dead of night he came to this place and rescued the blue-eyed maiden.

"What!" And Paul leaped to his feet electrified.

"The Shawnee speaks words of truth," the redman replied composedly.

"Do you mean to say that Gumbo alone and unaided has found Marie — and in the night?"

"Ugh! The black man found her — he saved her."

"Saved her? From whom?"

Silverheels silently pointed to the dead panther.

"I understand!" Paul cried. "But how did he find her — how did he know that she was here and in danger?"

"White Eagle must answer his own questions; the Shawnee cannot answer them for him."

"But where are they, my red brother — the black man and the blue-eyed maiden? Where have they gone?"

"Here is their trail. Would White Eagle follow it?"

"Yes — yes; let's hasten to overtake them," Paul answered eagerly.

Again they set out, but soon the young man asked abruptly:

"If Gumbo and Marie were together, why didn't he conduct her to our camp at once?"

"My white brother's question is easily answered," the Indian returned. "At this spot they fell into the hands of the watchful and crafty Delawares."

"Surely you don't mean to tell me that the Delawares have recaptured my loved one?" Paul groaned.

'It is true — here are the marks of the struggle," the Shawnee responded, a ring of disappointment in his voice.

"Then what's to be done?"

"Follow Red Fox and his Delaware squaws to their camp upon the Tuscarawas."

"You think they have set out for that place, with the prisoners?"

"Ugh!"

"Very well, let's move on. It is very disappointing — very discouraging — but I must bear up under it. Lead the way; you cannot travel too rapidly to please me. Oh, for just one shot at Red Wallace!"

Like two somber shadows they moved forward upon the trail, swiftly, silently, cautiously. As they passed the Delaware camp of the night before, the snow began to fall. Little by little it obscured the tracks of the fleeing red men. Lower and lower bent the Shawnee; but he did not slacken his rapid pace. Thicker and faster the flakes descended, and after a time, the redman said:

"The trail is hidden."

"What's to be done?" Paul asked.

"The Delawares are moving rapidly toward their distant village. They know avengers are upon their track. Silverheels and his white brother will follow them. The trail is lost; but Silverheels is not lost. He knows where the Red Fox has made his den. Come."

Late in the afternoon, the snow ceased to fall and the air grew colder. At nightfall, the wind was blowing a biting gale and piling the light snow in fantastic shapes that gave to the fast-darkening landscape a sheeted and ghostly aspect. Morning dawned; and the sun shone from a cloudless sky.

Silverheels and Paul were astir at an early hour, trudging onward with but one purpose. Several times, in sheltered places, where the the snow had not drifted, the two friends came upon the tracks of the party in advance; and, judging from the apparent freshness of these marks, they were gradually gaining upon the savages. By mid-afternoon they were following a broad and well-defined trail, and realized that they were approaching the Indian village.

When winter twilight again heralded the approach of night, Paul and Silverheels went into camp. They knew that they were close upon Red Wallace and his prisoners; but they had a cunning and desperate foe to deal with, and took no risk of ambush.

The following morning, at sunrise, they stood overlooking the village upon the Tuscarawas. Their point of observation was one of the wooded hilltops that walled in the valley, on the west. Beneath them lay the stream itself; and just across it, in the center of a cleared space in the forest, stood the village of scattered huts and cabins. There were about fifty of these, illy constructed of poles and logs, surrounding a large council lodge upon the bank of the stream. The valley at this point widened into a natural amphitheater, through which ran the sparkling river. The eastern rampart was rock-strewn and precipitous, with frowning cliffs

jutting outward from the trees and bushes that clothed its rugged sides.

The village was a mere hunting camp. At this time, it was the temporary home of about one hundred and fifty Delaware and Wyandot braves with a number of squaws, dogs and children. The main villages of these tribes were upon the Maumee.

Red Wallace had brought Marie to this camp, in expectation that her rescuers would proceed at once to the Maumee. He had intended to remove her to the principal village, as soon as the hue and cry was over, and there abandon her to a life of suffering and abuse. But he changed his plans. He was seriously wounded and unable to undertake so long a journey. Besides, he was convinced by the presence of Gumbo, that his ruse had been penetrated and that brave and skillful whites were in the immediate vicinity of his retreat, bent on rescuing the maiden. As soon as he was strong enough he would slip away to Marietta, force Hester to join him, and be off to Virginia, ere anyone was aware of his presence in the settlement. In that way, too, he could avoid the payment of the large amount of gold that he had promised his Indian allies. If Marie were finally rescued, what matter? He would have Hester and her property.

As Paul Graydon and Silverheels stood looking down upon the village of the Aborigines, half hidden among the trees, they saw smoke curling from the

lowly huts, and human beings moving to and fro among them.

The distance was so great the young Englishman could not distinguish form or features. But Silverheels' eagle eye penetrated the remotest and most shadowy nooks of the valley. Suddenly he gave a grunt of satisfaction, and bent forward in his eagerness to miss nothing of the scene before him.

"What do you see, my red friend?" Paul inquired.

"Red Fox!" the Shawnee muttered in reply. "He leaves the council lodge and moves toward a smaller lodge that stands near. He is ill from the wound the blue-eyed maiden gave him."

"Do you see anything of her we seek?"

The Shawnee shook his head: "She is not to be seen. But Red Fox has entered the smaller lodge to the right of the council lodge; no doubt she is there?"

Paul ground his teeth in silent rage, and gripped the stock of his rifle so firmly his fingers ached.

"Let's be up and doing!" he cried hotly.

The Shawnee answered: "White Eagle and Silverheels are only two; the Delawares and Wyandots are many. They are squaws, but they are cunning and merciless. If we would rescue the blue-eyed maiden, we must fight fire with fire. We must oppose cunning with cunning. If the braves of Red Fox discover our tracks in the snow, they will be on their guard. It must not be. We will seek

a hiding place, and there remain until the hungry sun has eaten all the snow. Then, at night, we will creep into the den of the Red Fox and bear off the Blue-eyed Pigeon."

"But," Paul objected, "it may be many days ere the snow's gone."

"No," Silverheels replied positively, "in a few days the ground will be brown. The sun is very hungry. Like a greedy pig, he will eat all day long. Red Fox will send out scouts to look for us; but they will return to the village and say that no palefaces are in the surrounding forest. Then will the Red Fox feel secure and grow careless — and White Eagle and the Shawnee will carry off the blue-eyed maiden."

"And Gumbo," Paul completed.

"Ugh!" Silverheels assented; but the manner in which he uttered the guttural monosyllable indicated that he was not heartily in favor of his friend's amendment. It was evident he had a feeling of aversion for Paul's sable friend.

"I must submit to your better judgment," Graydon said, reluctance in his voice, "but I don't know how I am to endure it. Where shall we stay until it's time to rescue the captives?"

"I know a place where we may hide for weeks, and no Delaware or Wyandot can discover our retreat. Let us go."

"Is it far away?"

"No, come; I will show you."

"What a strange being!" the young Englishman thought, as he followed the redman. "At one time, he is an Indian with all the instincts and attributes of a savage; at another, he is a white man endowed with the most admirable qualities of the race. Just now he dropped his figurative style of speech and spoke as the whites do, in the first person. I could have closed my eyes and readily believed I heard the voice of an educated and refined American or Englishman."

Silverheels led the way along the ridge, until they came to a point a mile or more up the river from the Indian village. Here they crossed the valley and ascended the eastern hills. Continuing their course along this ridge, in the direction of the village, they came to a deep and rocky ravine that opened into the river valley, a few rods above the camp. Scrambling over rocks and swinging by vines and bushes, they reached the bottom of this cleft. The ground was strewn with large, irregular bowlders, that had fallen from the beetling cliffs. A dusky twilight pervaded the place and gave objects near and remote a ghostly and unreal appearance.

The floor of the ravine rose gradually until it reached the level of the hilltops, about two miles back from the Tuscarawas. Where the ravine opened into the river valley, the thread-like brook poured its puny flood over a ledge of rocks about thirty feet in height. The only way to reach the

place where our two friends were standing, was to follow down the little stream from its origin, two miles away; or, at the risk of neck and limb, to swing down the nearly perpendicular face of the cliffs, as they had done.

"Is this the place of which my red brother spoke?" Paul asked.

"Ugh!" was the curt response.

"'Tis a lonesome and forbidding place in which to spend days of anxiety and nights of suspense," the young man remarked.

"White Eagle has not seen all," Silverheels replied calmly. "Let him come with the Shawnee."

The Indian turned the corner of an immense boulder and entered a narrow fissure in the rocky wall. Paul kept close to the redman's heels. They left the dim twilight behind them and plunged into the stygian blackness of a low-roofed passage.

"Hold!" cried Paul, "I can see nothing. Where are you leading?"

Silverheels placed the muzzle of his gun in the young man's hand, saying:

"Follow; I will lead you."

As they proceeded the crevice that they were traversing grew wider and higher. Paul noted that the air of the passage was warm and wet, but fresh and sweet; and he marveled that it should be so. On they went for quite a distance, the floor of the entrance rising and growing drier all the while. The Shawnee silently threaded the serpentine entry

as though perfectly familiar with its intricate turnings. At last he stopped and said:

"White Eagle stands in the center of a cavern whose existence is known to but two men — and my white brother is one of them."

Though the Indian spoke in a low tone, his voice was amplified by the close air and rocky walls to such an extent that his words sounded with almost startling distinctness. From this Paul judged that the cave was large and high, and in this he was not mistaken. What surprised him most, however, was the fact that a faint glow illuminated it, and that the form of his companion and the rugged walls themselves were dimly visible. He looked around for the cause, and was surprised to see a subdued light at the end of the cavern farthest from him. As though divining his friend's thoughts, Silverheels caught him by the hand and led him toward the light. They had gone but a few yards, when Paul made the discovery that they were drawing near to a second outlet, and that the blinding daylight was streaming through it.

This opening looked down upon the valley of the Tuscarawas; and directly beneath it lay the Indian village. It was fifty feet above the level of the plain upon which the camp stood, and was concealed from view by a dense growth of laurel and wild plum bushes that had foothold upon a projecting ledge of rocks. The hill immediately back of the village rose vertically to a height of one hundred feet; and

midway between its crest and base was the outlet of the cave.

Silverheels and Paul reached the projecting ledge and looked down upon the landscape spread out at their feet. They were concealed from the gaze of those below, by the bushes along the outer edge of the ledge. From their elevated point of observation, they could have thrown a stone into the center of the group of huts dotting the plain beneath.

Paul smothered his exclamation of wonder and surprise, and remarked:

"We cannot descend to the plain from this outlet, my red brother."

"Nor can the Delawares and Wyandots enter our hiding place through it."

"True; but how are we to reach the village when we wish to do so?"

"The Shawnee knows the way; there is a break in the ledge at the mouth of the ravine."

"And can we descend and return in that way?"

"Ugh!"

"Are you sure our enemies cannot reach us here?"

"Have the Delawares and Wyandots wings with which to scale the face of the cliffs?" was the Shawnee's rejoinder.

"No" — and Paul glanced upward at the jutting rocks that overhung the mouth of the cavern — "but may they not enter from the ravine?"

With a positive shake of the head, Silverheels re-

plied: "White Eagle has naught to fear. His enemies are ignorant of the existence of the cave."

"But should they discover it and enter it from the ravine, we should be caught like rats in a hole; there would be no way of escape."

A self-satisfied smile, for a moment, hovered around the Indian's mouth, as he answered complacently: "Though the brown mole is blind he can find a way out of his hole in the ground. Silverheels is not a deaf and blind mole; he has eyes and ears. Though the cavern should swarm with Delaware and Wyandot braves, he would fight his way through them and escape. White Eagle, the cave has another opening, but it is dangerous and difficult to follow. When the time comes, the Shawnee will show it to his white brother. Now he must procure meat and means of cooking it. Let White Eagle follow him."

The two retraced their steps to the ravine. There they procured a quantity of driftwood that had been deposited among the bowlders, by the little stream when it was swollen by heavy rain or melting snow, and returned with it to the cavern. They made several trips to and fro, conveying to their retreat enough fuel to last them a week. In doing this Paul learned to follow the tortuous course of the subterranean passage — which was more than a hundred yards in length — by the sense of touch.

When they had completed their task, Silverheels kindled a fire upon the floor, saying:

"Let my white brother lie down and rest; I go to the woods to procure meat."

Ere Paul could make reply, the Indian was gone. The young man threw himself upon the dusty floor and watched the dancing flames and sparkling embers.

"It's quite a comfortable place," he mused, "and the fire makes it light and cheerful; but what becomes of the smoke? Evidently it escapes through crevices in the roof. I trust it won't reveal our hiding place. I wish Marie and Gumbo were here. I'll rescue them, however, or lose my life in the attempt!"

He had fallen asleep. When he awoke, the Shawnee was sitting by the fire, busily engaged in broiling venison upon the red coals. Paul's first words were:

"You are back?"

"Ugh!" his companion grunted, without looking up.

"And you were successful?"

A nod of the tufted head.

"Is it afternoon?"

"The sun is low in the western skies."

They ate heartily of the savory meat; and lay down to sleep. As the young Englishman was again crossing the threshold, he roused himself and asked:

"Silverheels, how long have you known of this cavern?"

"When the Shawnee was a youth, he tracked a panther to his lair. The fierce beast's home was in this cave."

A few moments later their heavy breathing denoted that both men slept.

CHAPTER XXIX

THREE days passed, and mild weather came. The noisy streams swelled their bosoms, and again the brown earth was stark. The air grew moist; and fleecy fog hung heavy over the river and larger water courses.

Red Wallace improved rapidly. Rest and shelter worked wonders in his condition. He recovered from the effects of excessive hemorrhage and regained a part of his wonted strength. His distressing cough and shortness of breath did not entirely disappear, however, and frequent pain in the chest reminded him that his wound was not wholly healed.

The Indians were angry over the loss of the two warriors slain by Silverheels, and thirsted for revenge. They attributed the death of their comrades to the markmanship of Gumbo. Their only reason for believing that it was the negro was that they had found him upon their trail. At a meeting in the council lodge, the night after the return of the party, they demanded that the darky be given over to them, to torture, and that Wallace at once pay them the balance of the gold he had promised. The wily renegade acceded to their demands for the surrender of the black, but explained that he — Wallace

— must go to Marietta for the gold, and begged them to be patient until he was able to make the journey. He told them that they should have their share without fail, on his return, and that he would send a runner to the Maumee with the coin for the Wyandots who had gone there with the male prisoners.

There was some grumbling at the delay; but on the whole his explanations and promises were satisfactory. The readiness with which he relinquished all claim to Gumbo disarmed his hearers of suspicion. They did not know the blood-thirsty scoundrel was well pleased that the unfortunate negro was to meet a horrible death at their hands. Red Wallace had not forgotten the Fourth of July, nor the pummeling he had received from Paul Graydon.

It was the night before the day set for the torture of poor Gumbo. A heavy mist enshrouded the valley. Here and there, the light of a fire or torch twinkled in one of the low huts; but all else was wrapped in darkness.

In the cavern, Paul Graydon and his red companion were engaged in earnest conversation. The flickering firelight plashed the rough rock walls and faintly illuminated the faces of the two men. There came to their ears the soft drip of water in the winding passage leading to the ravine. Paul was saying:

"I cannot bear this inactivity longer. Marie knows nothing of our presence in the vicinity; and no doubt has given up all hope of rescue. There's

no need of further delay. The snow is gone; so we shall leave no marked trail to betray us. The red men are unaware that we are near, and the camp is unguarded. The night is favorable — let's make the attempt to rescue them. What have you to say, my friend?"

For some seconds the Shawnee puffed in silence, at the long-stemmed pipe he had lighted. He inhaled the blue and pungent smoke into his deep chest, and exhaled it through his aqualine nose, with every indication of enjoyment. Presently he removed the pipe from his lips and said slowly:

"Would White Eagle attempt to carry off the blue-eyed maiden and the black man, ere he knows where they are or how they are guarded?"

"Well — well!" Paul cried irritably. "What, then, shall we do?"

"Silverheels would glide into the village, learn what he wishes to know, and return to his white brother."

"I will accompany you," said Graydon, rising to his feet.

"No!"— and the word had in it the ring of unalterable opposition — "the Shawnee will go alone. Two men are more easily seen than one; two men make more noise than one. Silverheels will go alone. He will steal into the camp and creep among the lodges, as the serpent wriggles through the tall grass. He will keep his eyes and ears open; he will see and hear much. He will go alone."

Without waiting for reply, he leaped to his feet, caught up his rifle, and glided out of the cavern with the noiselessness of a spirit.

In the center of the large council lodge of the village, a fire smouldered. The dark smoke ascended to the roof and escaped through an opening left for the purpose. Now and then a tongue of red flame shot out of the bed of glowing embers and licked at the surrounding darkness. Its fitful light revealed the forms of the two occupants of the large, unfloored room. Close to the fire was a Wyandot warrior. He sat bolt upright, his legs doubled under him and his gun resting across his lap. Immovable as a figure of hammered copper, he stared into the red coals, neither moving a muscle nor batting an eye. Back in the depths of the thickest darkness, lay Gumbo. He rested upon the bare ground, near the log wall of the building, with his legs and arms securely fettered. His eyes were closed, but he was not asleep. Of a sudden he moaned and stirred. Then he moved his limbs and attempted to sit up; but fell back with a groan of pain, and commenced to talk to himself:

"I isn't gwine to be able to stan' dis kin' of usury berry much longer — I isn't. I hasn't nobody to talk to, eben; dat Injin debil jes sets dar an' looks at de coals widout blinkin' an eye — neber says nuffin'. Silberheels was bad 'nuff; but he could *grunt*. I wonder whar dat Shawnee an' Marse Paul am. Dey's a pow'ful long time in findin' dis nigger. An' Miss

M'rie — de purty little gal — 'spect dat good-fo'-nuffin runygate's to'mentin' de sweet life outen 'er. Whew! but dese strings does cut into dis darky's meat. 'Bout one mo' day, an' I won't hab no feet n'r han's — dey'll be plumb sawed in two. Wish I could jes set up a little minute — jes to res' my achin' bones. 'F I eber gits free, I'll make de mos' inanimate vituperation fo' dat outlawin' cuss — I will! Here comes somebody dis berry minute. Guess I'd bes' pr'ten' to be 'sleep — maby it's dat Red Wallace, hisse'f."

A dark figure stalked through the open doorway and came toward the center of the room. It was the outlaw. He said a few words in the Wyandot tongue to the watchful Indian, who immediately arose and left the lodge. When Wallace and Gumbo were left alone, the former stirred the fire into a blaze, and, drawing near, said sneeringly:

"Hello, nigger! Feeling first rate, eh?"

The darky feigned sleep. The renegade touched him with his foot and cried:

"Wake up, you thick-headed brute! Don't you hear me talking to you?"

Gumbo opened his eyes slowly and returned:

"Is dat you, Marse Wallace?"

"Yes; is dat you?" Wallace mimicked. "Now, nigger," he continued, "wake up; I want to talk to you."

He seated himself upon the ground by Gumbo's side, and went on: "You remember that you threw

me twice in a wrestle at Marietta, and made me the laughing stock of the crowd. I was mad; and, as a consequence, I received a drubbing at the hands of your master, Mr. Paul Graydon. You remember? Well, I vowed then and there to be revenged upon both of you. My time has come. I've Paul Graydon's sweetheart and yourself in my power. I haven't decided yet what I'll do with the murderous jade" — here he ground his teeth — "but as for you, I've given you over to the tender mercies of my red hounds. They'll burn you, skin you alive, and tear you limb from limb. Do you know that when morning dawns, you're to die — die a death the thought of which makes the bravest men tremble and turn pale?"

"I doesn't know nuffin' ob de kin'," Gumbo replied, without a tremor.

"Well, you are. This is your last night upon earth."

"I doesn't b'liebe it!" the darky returned, stoutly. "De good Lo'd isn't done gone fo'sooken dis nigger, in no demonstratin' way like dat — he isn't. Ol' Gumbo isn't skeered a mite. 'Sides dar's Marse —"

He was going to say that he expected Paul and Silverheels to rescue him; but he checked himself just in time. Wallace was watching him, keenly alert to his every word and expression. Now the renegade cried sharply:

"Besides what? Go on!"

Gumbo was lying with his back within a few inches of the log wall. Just at that moment, he heard a faint scratching sound on the other side of the wooden barrier. Then something that felt like a human hand gently touched his shoulder.

Red Wallace repeated his words: "Besides what?"

"Nuffin'," the darky replied.

"I know what you were going to say. You were going to say that Paul Graydon and his comrades would rescue you."

And the outlaw closely watched for the effect of his words. But Gumbo gave no sign by word or look that his inquisitor had hit upon the truth. Wallace continued:

"The Indians want to torture you because they believe you killed two of their comrades, the night the blockhouse was burned. Of course I know it wasn't you did it. It was one of the settlers that escaped from the cabin at Big Bottom, or some other white. I know also that there were others upon our trail besides yourself; and that they are hovering around the camp at the present time. Now, you tell me who they are, and I'll do my best to have the Indians abandon their idea of killing you tomorrow. I'll try to make them believe that your comrades are guilty. This is your only chance for life. Without my intervention, you die. What do you say?"

Wallace had no idea of interfering in behalf of the darky. But the conscienceless scoundrel was not

averse to telling a lie, when it answered his purpose. The black simply set his heavy jaws and made no reply.

"What do you say?" Wallace repeated impatiently.

"I doesn't say nuffin'," Gumbo replied at last; "I doesn't b'liebe a word you says. If de Injin debils is gwine to kill ol' Gumbo, dey'll kill him — dat's all; an' you wouldn't sabe him if you could. I knows *you!* If you knows dat dar's white folks hangin' 'round de camp, you ought to know who dey *am,* widout 'quirin' ob dis nigger."

The darky stopped suddenly. That mysterious touch was again laid upon his shoulder, and the word, "Courage," was breathed into his ear. Wallace arose; and, with a dark scowl upon his flabby face, hissed:

"Die, you stubborn black dolt! Curse your impudent picture! When you're undergoing the agonies of torture, I'll stand by and mock you; and I won't lift a finger to save you!"

In a towering passion, he strode out of the lodge; and Gumbo was left alone. In a few moments, the Wyandot returned and took up his old position by the fire.

"So I's to die tomorrow," the negro muttered to himself, as the Wyandot's grotesque shadow again floated upon the opposite wall. "I's gwine to be bu'ned, an' drawed an' quartered, is I? Well, w'ile dey's doin' all dat to me, wat'll *I* be doin'? Does

dey 'spect dat ol' Gumbo'll jes set still an' let 'em poke him full ob holes? 'Sides, I guesses dat Marse Paul an' Silberheels'll hab somefin' to say, too — I does. It was dat Shawnee out dar punchin' me froo de crack. I knowed him by de contents ob his modulation, w'en he said, ' Courage.' De whisper ob his vocabulary seemed to come clean outen his moccasins. Can't fool dis nigger — dat was Silberheels!"

The darky was right in his surmise. It was Silverheels. As the herculean form of Red Wallace darkened the doorway of the council lodge, the Shawnee sprang from his reclining position by the log wall and like a great bat flitted away in the darkness. The renegade sought the cabin near at hand, where Marie was confined. With clenched hand he thundered upon the closed door. When it was unbarred from the inside, he stepped over the sill and closed it behind him. As he did so, Silverheels came around the corner of the hut, and, throwing himself prone upon the earth, glued his eye to the crack beneath the door.

The building in which Marie was held a prisoner did not differ materially from any other in the village. It was a crude affair without floor or fireplace. The walls were of large poles loosely piled one above another; and the roof was of brush and bark. A small opening in one side admitted light and air, and a larger one in the roof served the purpose of a chimney. In the center of the small, close room, a few coals snapped and crackled. Upon a

pile of furs in one corner, lay the fair prisoner. Her garments were in rags and her face was pale and anxious. In the opposite corner sat an aged crone; her coarse, gray locks fell in a tangled mass about her wrinkled face, full of cunning, cruelty and avarice. She was an old, old woman, and yet the fires of evil passion still burned fiercely.

She had unbarred the door for the outlaw and then reseated herself. As he stood in the middle of the room, silently surveying the young girl upon the couch of furs, the old hag cackled shrilly:

"Ha, ha! The Red Fox comes to visit the pale-face squaw. She is fair; but she is a fierce eagle. Has not the Red Fox felt her beak? Let him beware; her claws may reach his heart. Ha, ha!"

"Stop your clack, you old fool!" Wallace cried roughly, as he scowled fiercely upon her.

Both spoke in the Delaware language; and Marie could not understand a word that was said.

"The Red Fox's tongue is sharp," the crone mumbled with toothless jaws, "but not so sharp as the eagle's claws; Red Fox cannot *kill* with his tongue." Again she laughed that cracked, discordant laugh.

"Shut up!" the renegade thundered. "If Bitter Water wants to have a whole bone left in her misshapen and worthless carcass, she'd better hold her limber tongue!"

The aged squaw muttered something and was silent. The renegade lighted a torch and stuck it into

a crevice in the wall; then walked over to Marie and said:

"Glad to see an old friend, my princess, eh?"

Receiving no reply, he resumed: "Still surly — still pouting, eh? Well, you'll find your voice after awhile, I warrant. Fire has a wonderfully loosening influence on a stiff and stubborn tongue. I came in to tell you a bit of good news; thought it might cheer up you. Your nigger is to run the gauntlet in the morning. It's great sport; of course you'll want to go out and see it. Shall I call for you, when it comes off?"

The French girl shuddered. With a half sob in her voice, she said:

"Please do not say more. Would you kill me with your horrible recital?"

"I see you can talk when you want to," the outlaw chuckled. "Here's another bit of good news for you: "I leave here in a few days, never to return. I go to claim the charming Miss Lovelace for my bride. With her I'll return to Virginia and settle down to married life — to a luxurious and peaceful existence among my old acquaintances in the valley of the Shenandoah. Oh! it's better to be born fortunate than handsome. What a lucky star I was born under! When I leave here, you and the redskins will see me no more. Not a grain of all the gold I have promised the red hounds will they ever get. I'll live a live of peace and plenty; while you'll live and die the drudge of some Delaware or

Wyandot brave. Enchanting prospect for you, eh? Don't you wish the knife had gone a little deeper when you struck me? You'll do well if you escape death at the stake. The redskins will burn you alive, if you cross them. How the lovely Hester will rejoice when I bear the good tidings to her!"

Wallace stopped suddenly, his attention attracted by the strange actions of the old hag in the corner. Her sunken eyeballs gleamed like coals of fire, and her claw-like fingers dug into the hard earth and twitched convulsively. Her toothless jaws were set and her eyes were fixed upon the form of the renegade.

"What the mischief's the matter with you, you infernal old beldame?" he howled, turning angrily upon her.

Marie had buried her face in the pile of furs and placed her hands over her ears, to exclude the sound of his hateful voice. Now she slyly peeped out to ascertain the cause of his outburst of passion. She saw the crone spring to her feet with a nimble and vigorous leap that was remarkable for one of her years, and clutch at the throat of the surprised outlaw. With all the strength at his command, Wallace shook off the ancient squaw's feeble grasp, and, seizing her by the shoulders, flung her to the ground, where she lay moaning and whimpering childishly. Then with the words — "Bar the door and mind the girl, you toothless huzzy!" — he strode out, muttering as he went:

"I've committed a terrible blunder; I forgot Bitter Water understands English! Her tongue must be silenced. Once let the redskins become aware of my intentions, and my life wouldn't be worth a mink-skin. What's to be done? One thing is certain; I must hasten my departure. Gods! what a fool I was to indulge in idle boasting. The hag must die before she blabs my secret!"

He went directly to his own cabin up the stream. Scarcely had the sound of his light footfalls died out, when Silverheels crept from the black shade of old Bitter Water's low hut and stole away toward the cavern in the hillside.

CHAPTER XXX

PAUL GRAYDON sat impatiently awaiting the return of his red friend. The fire on the cavern floor burned dim and low, and a torch stuck into the rock wall spluttered and went out. The young man arose, walked to the mouth of the cave, and looked down upon the sleeping village. He could see nothing for the dense mist flowed like a river of milk over the site of the Indian camp; and he returned to the fire. It was midnight; and an oppressive silence seemed to hang about him.

"Will he *never* come?" Graydon whispered fretfully to himself, as he raised his arms above his head and yawned.

A hazy shadow fell upon the floor; and Silver-heels stood beside him.

"What have you to report?" cried Paul, hastily getting upon his feet.

In a few crisp sentences, the Shawnee told all he had seen and heard. He closed his recital by saying:

"The blue-eyed maiden may be rescued. She is guarded only by Bitter Water; and the squaw is old and weak. But the black man is lost — he will die tomorrow. He is closely watched by a wakeful Wy-

andot brave. The black man must run the gauntlet."

"Is there no way by which he may be rescued?" Paul asked feelingly.

Silverheels shook his head.

"Can we not rush in and save him when he is brought out?"

"We are but two; the Delawares and Wyandots are many. Would White Eagle court death — would he abandon the blue-eyed maiden?"

"No!" the young Englishman replied, his voice choked with emotion. "Nor will I abandon my black friend. If he dies, I die with him. He would risk his life to serve me; I'll risk mine to save him. I've made up my mind. Hear me, my red brother! Tonight I go into the Indian camp, to rescue my true-love and my black friend. I go, though I go alone. What says the brave and true Shawnee?"

Silverheels' countenance shone with the light of sweet and tender emotion. His whole face was irradiated by a smile such as Paul had never seen upon the red man's rugged features. He exclaimed:

"White Eagle is brave; he does not shrink from death! White Eagle is true; he will not desert a friend! White Eagle is Silverheels' brother — the Shawnee loves him, and will lead or follow him wherever he goes!"

"Thank you, my red brother; thank you!" Paul murmured in an almost inaudible voice.

For several seconds they stood face to face in silence. Silverheels was the first to speak.

"The night passes," he said in soft, gutteral accents; "ere the dawn of another day we may be in the sprit-land — but we shall not be parted. If White Eagle falls, Silverheels will fall at his side. The night passes; let us hasten. Death lurks among the lodges of the Delawares and Wyandots; let us go to meet him."

"Is it so hopeless? Have we so little chance of success?" Graydon asked.

"Ugh! When the morning sun again kisses the hilltops, the blue-eyed maiden and the black man will be with us in the cave, or with us in the spirit-land. If we do not succeed, we shall die!"

"Let it be so!" Paul answered, resolutely. "You know the way; lead on."

Taking with them their trusty rifles and long keen hunting-knives, the two determined men left the cavern by the winding passage of the ravine. They proceeded cautiously and silently down the ravine, to its mouth; passed through a rift in the jutting ledge of stone; and descended to the valley by a narrow and precipitous path strewn with loose fragments of rock. The darkness was intense and rendered their progress slow and perilous; for a step upon a rolling pebble might precipitate one or both into the dark depths, with a crash that would arouse the entire village. Reaching the plain in silence and safety, they crept, little by little, in the di-

rection of old Bitter Water's hut. At times they boldly walked erect; then upon hands and knees they crept; again they threw themselves prone and wormed forward, inch by inch. Silverheels led and Graydon closely copied the Shawnee's every movement. As they were passing a cabin, where a dim light burned, a stalwart form came to the door and gazed intently in their direction.

"Hist!" whispered Silverheels, grasping his companion's arm. "Stand; it is the Red Fox. He sees us not."

The two friends stood motionless as statues, for several minutes, scarcely daring to breathe. After what seemed an age, Wallace stepped back and closed the door.

"Come," the Shawnee breathed into Paul's ear; Red Fox saw nothing but the darkness."

At last they drew near the lodge where Marie was confined. Not a ray of light was to be seen, nor a sound to be heard. With a silent signal, Silverheels crept to the hole in the wall to ascertain the state of affairs within the hut, while Paul kept an eye upon the closed doorway. When the Shawnee returned he said:

"The blue-eyed maiden sleeps. Her soft breathing fills the lodge; but Bitter Water is dead or absent. Now is the time to act; let White Eagle warn the captive of his presence."

Paul stepped up to the door and tried it with the tips of his fingers. It was not fastened; and he

pushed it open and stepped inside, closely followed by Silverheels. Suddenly the regular breathing of the sleeper ceased. Paul felt his way to the corner in which his sweetheart lay and bending over her, whispered softly:

"It is I — Paul. Hist! not a word."

"Paul — my Paul!" she answered in the same low tone. "You've come at last. I had begun to fear I should never see you again."

"You are tied?"

"Yes, I'm bound hand and foot. The old squaw secured my limbs ere she left the cabin. I made no resistance; I knew that it wouldn't avail me."

"Where has the hag gone?" Paul inquired as he felt for his hunting-knife.

"I don't know; she left me an hour ago. It is the first time she has been absent since the outlaw placed me in her care."

Graydon severed the thongs and helped her to arise. Two warm arms were thrown around his neck and two dewy lips met his own. He drew her to him in an ecstacy of joy at again having her under his care and protection. Silverheels came forward, and, touching Paul upon the shoulder, said earnestly:

"The moments are fleet of foot; Bitter Water will soon return. Let her find the nest deserted and the blue-eyed pigeon gone."

"Silverheels!" Marie ejaculated under her breath.

"Yes," the young Englishman replied, arousing himself. "Without his help I never should have found you. Come, there is no time for delay."

He took her by the arm and carefully led her from the gloom within to the gloom without. On reaching his comrade's side Paul asked:

"Where now?"

"The black man is in the council lodge," was the guttural response; "let us release him, and leave but our tracks in the village of the Delawares and Wyandots. The moments will not wait at our bidding. Soon will Bitter Water return to her empty lodge and give the alarm. Follow the Shawnee and let your footfalls be as soft as the falling mist. The Delawares and Wyandots are light sleepers; they waken at the sound of a rustling leaf."

The fog and mist had changed to a steady drizzle. The darkness was impenetrable; and the wash of the river near at hand was muffled and indistinct. Soon they felt, rather than saw, that a large object loomed up before them. It was the building they sought. The Shawnee changed his course and turned the corner, while Paul and Marie kept close at his heels.

A faint light streamed from the open doorway of the lodge. Silverheels stopped and listened intently for several seconds. Then he said in a voice that was scarcely audible:

"Move not. The Wyandot is awake. He must die!"

The Shawnee glided silently toward the door of the lodge. Stopping just without the circle of light, he imitated the rasping notes of the katydid. The Indian on guard sprang to his feet and, with a grunt of surprise, rushed to the door. One moment he stood peering into the outer darkness. The next he sank to the ground, a corpse, with Silverheels' hunting-knife buried in his heart.

Marie nestled closer to her lover's side; and he felt her shudder.

Silverheels leaped over the body of the dead Wyandot and rushed to the negro. Gumbo had been sleeping and had heard nothing. He looked up in wide-eyed wonder as the Shawnee bent above him, knife in hand. Suddenly aroused from a sound sleep, the sight of the Indian with a bloody knife filled the poor darky with alarm. He was on the point of uttering a piercing yell, when Silverheels deftly clapped his hand over the frightened fellow's mouth, and grunted:

"Ugh! Big fool!"

"Am dat you, Silberheels?" was the question the black blubbered beneath the other's hand.

"Ugh!" again grunted the red man, in a low tone.

"Whar am Marse Paul?"

The Shawnee removed his hand from the negro's mouth and quickly cut the thongs, saying as he did so:

"White Eagle and the blue-eyed maiden are near.

Hasten — come. The Delawares and Wyandots have keen eyes and ears. They may be upon us soon."

Gumbo struggled to his feet, and a pleased grin overspread his ebony features when he found he was able to walk. He started to follow his deliverer from the lodge, but stopped abruptly and inquired:

"Whar's dat Wyandock red debil?"

"In the spirit-land with his fathers," Silverheels replied in a cautious undertone.

"Mus' ob tooken a mighty sudden an' diversifyin' notion ob goin' on a journey all to once," the darky muttered, glancing hurriedly around the room; "fo' he was settin' right dar jes a minute ago. Guess dis nigger'll jes take de Wyandock's gun, kase de Injin debils has done gone stole ol' Gumbo's."

He secured the rifle that was lying by the fire and took the powder-horn and bullet-pouch from a peg upon the wall. Then he accompanied his impatient rescuer, to Paul and Marie. The delighted negro would have burst into shouts of ecstatic joy, had not Paul and Silverheels restrained him.

The four set out for the cave, carefully threading their way among the scattered huts. A slight breeze had set in from the north. It blew directly down the river, tearing the fog to tatters and piling it in ragged heaps upon the projecting crags that walled in the valley. A fine drizzling rain still continued; but the dim light of the sky filtered through the rifts

in the thin strata of clouds and faintly illuminated the scene. Silverheels was leading the way. They had nearly reached the eastern edge of the village, when the Shawnee dropped upon the earth and signaled for the others to do the same. A bent and muffled figure was slowly approaching from the Delaware chieftain's lodge at the upper end of the camp.

"Bitter Water!" Silverheels muttered to himself.

The aged squaw came toward them, mumbling inarticulately. She did not become aware of their presence until she almost stumbled over the form of Gumbo, who lay directly in her path. She staggered back a step or two; and, as she did so, the Shawnee leaped upon her and essayed to catch her by the throat. Ere he could do so, however, she threw back her head and uttered the war-whoop of the Delawares. Her voice was weak and cracked, but of sufficient vigor and capacity to reach the nearby cabins. Silverheels bore her to the ground and choked her into insensibility; but it was too late. The mischief had been done.

"To the cavern — hasten!" he cried, springing erect and starting off at a rapid pace.

Paul and Gumbo assisted Marie and attempted to keep close to the fleet-footed red man. Bitter Water's yell was answered from several points, and these cries of alarm brought forth others. They increased in number and swelled in volume, until the

village seemed alive with shouting, yelling demons. Torches flared and blazed; dogs barked; dark forms flitted here and there; and pandemonium reigned.

"Hasten!" Silverheels shouted, slackening his speed for the others to come up with him.

"On!" Paul panted as he and Gumbo almost lifted Marie from her feet in their efforts to aid her.

"I doesn't like dis pr'misc'ous way ob runnin' off from de red debils — I doesn't," the negro managed to say between breaths. "It's entirely too hard on de resp'ration ob de breaf!"

As the darky ceased speaking, several shadowy figures shot swiftly athwart the path of the fleeing party, and disappeared as quickly and completely as though the earth had yawned and swallowed them. The Shawnee came to an abrupt halt and ejaculated:

"The Delaware and Wyandot squaws have surrounded us; we must fight!"

"If we's gwine to hab a squirmish, I'll git dis Wyandock gun ready to do some talkin'," murmured the darky, as, with the palm of his hand, he hammered the breech of the rifle to prime it. "Doesn't know who'll be in de mos' dangerous pr'dicament — I doesn't — de Injin debil dat gits shot *at,* 'r de nigger dat does de *shootin'*. 'Spects I'll git knocked clean outen de kentry wid de ol' blunderbuss — I does —"

"Listen!" Marie cried, panting with exertion and

alarm. "They're closing in behind us; they are drawing nearer. What shall we do?"

"If it were not for you, dear one," Paul answered in a low and tender tone, "I should not care so much."

"Yes," she said, slowly and sadly, "if I were not with you, possibly you could escape."

"If we must die, at least we shall die together!" he returned, stooping and kissing her. Then, turning toward Silverheels who stood, leaning upon his rifle as though he were stolidly indifferent to the gravity of the situation, the young Englishman asked hurriedly:

"My red brother, what's to be done?"

The Indians had ceased their shrill war-whoops and cries of alarm. They had located the party and surrounded them, at a safe distance. Low signal calls and stealthy footsteps could be heard as they gradually drew nearer to the little band of fugitives. Silverheels did not answer Paul's question at once. When he did so, he said:

"Our steps have been too slow. The nimble-footed Delawares and Wyandots have surrounded us. If we stay here, we accept captivity or death; if we attempt to escape, we must fight. The braves are drawing closer. If we would escape, our way lies there — and death lurks in the darkness surrounding the path."

As he spoke the last sentence, he pointed toward the entrance of the ravine a hundred yards away.

"Death is preferable to captivity!" Graydon said. "Let's cut our way through to the cave. Once there, if the worst comes to the worst, we can at least sell our lives dearly. Lead on, my red brother, we can but die in the attempt!"

Silverheels looked to the priming of his rifle and strode forward. Gumbo and Paul walked with Marie, carrying their guns ready for instant use. They had gone but a short distance when a half dozen warriors rose from the earth. Quick as a flash, the Shawnee threw his gun to his shoulder and fired. Scarcely had the flame of the discharge expired, ere two other reports, following in quick succession, told that Paul and the darky had followed their red friend's example. The result was magical and instantaneous. Two Indians dropped dead in their tracks and a third lay moaning upon the ground. A chorus of hellish yells broke loose at all points of the compass; and the pattering of moccasined feet sounded like the rush of a stream. But over it all sounded the war-whoop of Silverheels, as he clubbed his rifle and rushed upon the remaining braves in his path.

"The Shawnee! The Shawnee!" cried the Delawares and Wyandots, as with howls of rage and hate they rushed to the aid of their companions.

"To the ravine!" shouted the Shawnee, swinging his long rifle above his head, and dealing terrific blows right and left.

Gumbo was at Silverheels' side; and as he fought he bellowed at the top of his voice:

"Gwine to make dis nigger run de gantelope, is you? Take dat — an' dat! 'Spect dat las' one 'll hab a monst'ous headache in de mornin'! Stan' back dar, you Injin debils! Cl'ar de track dar! W'at you crowdin' fo'? Whoopee! Dis chile's been in a squirmish befo'!"

Paul had dropped his gun after discharging it; and now, with his left arm around Marie, he clutched his long, keen hunting-knife in his right hand, and carved at the human wall that hemmed them in. The darkness and the number of the foe worked to the disadvantage of the Indians themselves. They could not use their arms for fear of injuring one another; and the blows that they struck were oftener received by their fellows than by the fugitives. The warriors in front of Graydon and his companions fell back before the desperate attack; and the throng surging behind carried the combatants, every moment, nearer the mouth of the ravine. At last Paul found himself a little in advance of his friends and at the foot of the steep and rocky path. Striking down an Indian that opposed his way, he caught the girl in his arms and sprang up the dangerous ascent. Reaching the floor of the ravine in safety, he dropped his precious burden and prepared to hold the pass. But, to his surprise, no enemy came.

He heard the uproar below, and knew Silverheels

and Gumbo were still fighting desperately. He was wounded and bleeding in a half dozen places, and his muscles ached; but at the sounds of combat his nostrils dilated and his breath came in gasps. The bulldog pugnacity of the English race was throbbing in his arteries.

"What shall I do," he panted, "leave her here and go to their aid, or stay to guard her?"

Marie overheard, and whispered the one word — "Go!"

Then she quietly seated herself upon the damp rock and pointed toward the steep path. Paul sprang down the declivity and again rushed into the thick of the fight. The surging Indians had carried his comrades several yards backward, toward the village. As he ran to join them, his foot struck an object that lay in his path. He stooped and picked up his own rifle. The recovery of his trusty weapon renewed his courage.

"This way!" he shouted at the top of his voice. "This way! To the ravine — Silverheels! Gumbo!"

They answered his calls and fought their way toward him. Soon the three were together; and, back to back, were struggling to disengage themselves from the red throng that thirsted for their blood.

"Whar's de purty little gal?" cried the negro, grave concern in his voice.

"Safe — safe!" Paul cried in ringing tones.

At that moment his feet again struck the path leading to the ravine, and he shouted triumphantly:

"Quick! up there, Gumbo! Follow, Silverheels!"

Our three friends scrambled up the ascent and reached the floor of the ravine. The Shawnee planted himself at the head of the steep path, and still swinging his death-dealing rifle, uttered a war-whoop that echoed throughout the glen. A number of Indians essayed to ascend, but blows from the butt of his gun dropped them into the depths below. The others, seized with panic, tumbled over each other in their attempt to escape. With frenzied howls of baffled rage, they collected at the foot of the path.

"To the cavern ere the squaws recover their courage!" Silverheels whispered as he led the way.

A few minutes later they found themselves in the large room of the cavern, and there began an examination of their wounds. Marie had received no injury except a few bruises, but the three men had not escaped so luckily. Paul had a deep knife-thrust in his shoulder that bled profusely; Gumbo, a lacerated wound of the scalp; and Silverheels, a number of tomahawk-cuts about the back and head. In addition, all were suffering from the effect of their extraordinary exertions.

After rekindling the fire and dressing their wounds as well as they could under the circumstances, they disposed themselves to rest and sleep.

Paul and the negro threw themselves down near the fire; but the Shawnee chose a position at the inner end of the winding passage, where he could hear the slightest noise made by anyone trying to enter their retreat.

CHAPTER XXXI

As murky dawn — like one who had spent the night in debauchery — came staggering into the valley of the Tuscarawas, Silverheels arose from his hard bed and stretched his stiffened limbs with a yawn of pain and unrest. The others were still sleeping the sleep of utter exhaustion. Without disturbing them, the Shawnee left the cavern. He was gone but a few minutes. When he returned, he sauntered to the mouth of the cave, looking down upon the Indian village, and stood there for some time, apparently lost in deep thought. Then he retraced his steps and, coming close to Paul, stooped and touched his white friend upon the shoulder. The latter awoke with a start and sprang erect.

"What is it, my red brother?" he asked.

"Within the cave it is night; but without the daylight shines," was the quiet reply.

"Is it morning?"

"Ugh!"

"And what of our enemies?"

"They are astir — they are searching for us. The village contains only the women and children; the warriors are abroad. They fill the ravine; and their

voices are heard on the hilltop over us. They know we are not far away. They are smelling out our trail."

"Do you think they will find our hiding place?" Paul asked in concern.

"Ugh! they are hounds. They are keen of scent."

"Then we must prepare to repel them. They must not gain admittance to the cave."

This was much easier to say than to do. Our three friends were sore and weak; and their stock of ammunition was running low. Besides, there were but three of them. There were scores of their enemies.

Paul and his companions cooked and ate a scanty breakfast of venison, washed it down with copious draughts of water procured from pools in the dark and winding passage; and anxiously awaited the next move on the part of their enemies. It was not long in coming. A series of triumphant yells, floating in through the damp fissure in the rocks, told that the Indians had discovered the entrance to the cavern.

"They come!" Graydon cried, excitedly. "Let us meet them at the outer end of the passage and beat them back."

"Wait," the Shawnee said, composedly.

The uproar in the ravine continued. Gumbo nervously fingered his rifle and rolled his big eyes. Marie clung to Paul in terror. He soothed her fears and coaxed her to seat herself behind a pro-

jecting point of rock, out of the way of stray bullets. Then he turned upon Silverheels and sharply demanded:

"What do you mean by standing here idle? They will be upon us ere we can strike a blow."

The Shawnee replied contemptuously: "White Eagle does not know the cowardly Delaware and Wyandot squaws. They will not creep into the den of the gray wolf, until he is tamed by fire and smoke."

"They will attempt to drive us out?"

"Ugh!"

"How?"

"As they force the gray wolf from his lair — by flame and smoke."

"But they can't succeed; there are too many openings to the cavern," Paul cried exultingly.

Silverheels nodded and replied: "White Eagle is brave and wise. He speaks words of truth. The cave is large and the outlets for smoke are many. The Delawares and Wyandots cannot smoke us out."

The crackle and roar of leaping flames came to their ears; and the blue-black smoke of burning brush and leaves rolled into the cave, in dense volumes. It circled and eddied around and through the great room, and drove the occupants nearer and nearer to the outlet facing the valley. It arose to the vaulted roof and found its way through the many cracks and crevices in the shale-rock. It

poured out at the opening, where Paul and his companions stood, but not in sufficient volume to seriously inconvenience them. One moment they were almost blinded and smothered by it. The next moment the fresh air drove it back; and they breathed freely.

Hidden by the fringe of bushes, they stood upon the narrow shelf of stone and peeped down upon the scene spread out beneath them. Suddenly, Silverheels uttered a guttural exclamation of surprise and pointed to the edge of the forest below the village. The others looked in the direction indicated, and observed a squad of warriors emerging from the woods and hurrying toward the council lodge that stood near the bank of the river. They conducted a white prisoner, who walked with bowed head. His captives hurried him forward, buffeting him with taunts and jeers. Paul caught his breath sharply, rubbed his eyes and looked again.

"If de Injin debils ain't done gone tooken dat runnygatin' Red Wallace captive," Gumbo ejaculated explosively, "den dis nigger's stone blind — dat's all!"

"It's the outlaw!" Marie gasped. "What can it mean?"

"He has proven traitor to his Indian allies; he has tried to slip away from them, and they have caught him," Paul said. "Is it not so, my red brother?"

"Ugh!" Silverheels grunted, "the Red Fox is

sly! he would slip away without paying the gold he promised. Bitter Water last night informed the Delaware chieftain of what she had heard Red Fox say to the blue-eyed maiden. She was at the chieftain's lodge when we bore away the maiden. The braves laid a trap for the Red Fox. He sought to steal away while the warriors were absent. Ugh! he is a fool. He will die at the stake!"

"We couldn't aid him if we would," Paul remarked musingly; "and I don't know that I should save him, if I had the opportunity. It is a fit end for him. He showed no mercy. And yet —"

The redmen, bearing the prisoner, had nearly reached the council lodge, when they came to a stop, and, gesticulating, pointed to the spot where the four fugitives stood. The distance was about two hundred yards; and the movements of the Indians were distinctly visible. Paul ceased speaking and drew farther into the shadow of the cavern. Gumbo and Marie followed his example; but the Shawnee stolidly maintained his position upon the outermost edge of the shelf of rock.

"Have they discovered us, that they gaze so earnestly in this direction?" the young man inquired.

Silverheeels slowly shook his head.

"The Delaware braves see the smoke issuing from the mouth of our hiding place. It tells them they cannot smoke us out. See! They send a messenger to tell those in the ravine of their discovery.

White Eagle, we must prepare to defend ourselves. The cavern will soon swarm with painted warriors."

Realizing the truth of the Indian's words, Paul requested him to assume the leadership and to direct what should be done to make their refuge as impregnable as possible. Presently the cave began to clear of smoke, thus showing that their enemies had withdrawn the fire and were preparing to enter. At the Shawnee's suggestion, the three men erected a barrier of large stones across the middle of the black and crooked entrance, and piled smaller stones near at hand, to be used in repelling their assailants. When this was done, they left Marie in the large and dry apartment, and stationed themselves behind the wall. Paul was the last to leave his sweetheart.

"Be not cast down, dear one," he said. "All chance of escape isn't yet gone. No doubt we shall be able to beat them back. The outlaw isn't here to urge them on; and they will not relish a hand-to-hand encounter in the dark and narrow passage. Pray that God may lend us strength and courage!"

"I shall pray for you, my Paul," she answered, clinging to his hand; "and God will hear my prayer. He will not desert us in our hour of greatest need. Go — and may He help us!"

An hour passed; and the three men, crouched upon the damp rock-floor, heard or saw no signs of their foes. Silverheels was on the point of climbing over the rocky obstruction and creeping to the

outer end of the corridor, to ascertain the designs of the Indians, when a flaming torch bobbed around a sharp turn, revealing the forms of warriors advancing cautiously along the passage.

"Dar dey comes!" whispered Gumbo, "An' dey's negotiatin' a torch along wid 'em, jes to show us whar dey is. Dey's de mos' obligin' an omniverous red debils —"

He had leveled his rifle and had his finger on the trigger, when Silverheels caught his arm and said: "Wait!"

On came the leader of the party, holding the torch aloft, and peering into every shadowy nook and cranny, while his companions crowded close upon his heels. They were but a few yards distant.

"Now!"

It was Silverheels who spoke. The three rifles cracked simultaneously; and the effect of the explosion was something terrific. The torch carried by the Indians was extinguished. The pent air rushed this way and that, bits of stone and shale dropped from the walls and roof; and the deafening report rolled and reverberated along the narrow, winding way, like the crash of heavy thunder. The yells, groans, and hurrying footsteps of the retreating Indians could be heard. Then all was silence.

"That was easily done!" Paul cried, triumphantly.

"Done skeered de Injin debils clean outen dar skins!" the negro chuckled, slapping his thigh and

dancing around in the darkness. "I doesn't s'pose dey'll eber come back some mo'; dey doesn't like de deception we gib 'em."

Silverheels said nothing, but went on reloading his gun as fast as he could. Noting this, Paul and Gumbo followed his example.

"Will they come again?" the young Englishman inquired.

"Ugh! The Delawares and Wyandots thirst for blood; they will come again and in greater numbers. Hist!"

Silverheels' companions scarcely breathed, they listened so intently; but no sound except the soft drip of water came to their ears.

"I hear nothing," Graydon whispered, with his face close to the Shawnee's.

"They come; they wriggle forward like serpents, in the thick blackness," was breathed into the young man's ear.

"Shall I have time to go to Marie, ere they are upon us?" Paul asked eagerly.

"Hear you not their quick breathing? Already they are upon us. Fire!"

Again the three rifles belched flame; and again the walls of the cavern vibrated with the force of the explosion. But the effect produced upon the Indians was far different from that before. Instead of retreating, they arose, yelling and firing, and rushed upon the barricade. The cave resounded with the clash and shock of conflict. Paul and his comrades

dropped their rifles and hurled stones upon the swarming red men, as they came on, but could not check their impetuous onslaught. In the darkness neither friend nor foe was distinguishable. The warriors reached the barricade and attempted to scale it. The trio behind it again seized their guns and rained blow after blow upon the heads of their assailants. High above all other sounds, rose the war-whoop of the Shawnee and the stentorian bellow of the darky. Paul fought silently and with grim determination. The Indians in the rear crowded upon those in front, and by mere weight of numbers threatened to carry the barricade. Time after time, stalwart braves gained the top of the wall, only to receive death wounds and fall back among their companions, or topple over upon the men they sought to slay. A blow upon the head dropped Paul senseless and bleeding, upon the floor. But Silverheels and Gumbo continued to fight like fiends. Little by little their strength was leaving them; soon they must succumb to superior numbers. Just at the moment when the darky's gun was wrested from his grasp, there came a diversion in favor of the two hard-pressed men.

Marie was crouched in an obscure corner of the large room of the cave, and pressing her fingers into her ears to shut out the noise of the conflict. In spite of her efforts, she heard the shouts, the blows and groans, and the ring of steel on steel, as gun-barrels, knives and tomahawks met and clashed in

the narrow corridor. At last — nearly crazed by fear, and hardly knowing what she did — she snatched a blazing torch from the fire and holding it aloft, rushed toward the scene of combat. There a horrifying spectacle was revealed to her, by the smoky light of the torch she carried. The rough rock-walls were bespattered with blood and brains, and the floor was strewn with the bodies of dead and wounded Indians. Among the fallen she saw the form of her lover. Gumbo and Silverheels were battling desperately, covered with blood from the wounds they had received. The barricade was broken down; and they, in the midst of struggling, yelling Indians.

Like the phantasm of a nightmare, all this flashed upon her much more quickly than it takes to tell it. Then she saw the negro borne to the floor, and a knife raised to kill him. With a scream of frenzy, the girl leaped forward and thrust the torch into the mocking face of the warrior bending over her black friend. The Indian's plaited locks, saturated with bear's grease, caught fire and burned fiercely. With a scream of fright and pain, he struggled to his feet; and, like a blazing meteor, shot down the corridor, spreading consternation and confusion in his course. In the crowd, he communicated the flames to the hair and garments of several other members of the band. Superstitious terror seized them, for but one or two had seen Marie's act; and with howls of pain and fear they beat a hasty retreat

The girl leaped forward and thrust the torch into the mocking face of the warrior

toward the open air, leaving their dead and wounded behind them. The thoughtless act of the French girl had saved her friends for the time being at least.

A half hour later, the Shawnee and his companions were reassembled around the fire in the cavern. Marie, seated upon the stone floor, held Paul's head in her lap, while Silverheels bathed the unconscious man's face and temples in cold water brought from the damp corridor. Gumbo, with his broken arm in a sling made of his leathern belt, stood looking down upon his white friend and silently wiping the trickling blood and tears from his own black face. The Shawnee's head, shoulders, and arms were hacked and bruised in a frightful manner; but he made no complaint. Without manifesting a twinge or grimace of pain, he went on administering to the wants of the others. Marie rocked herself to and fro as she bathed and caressed Paul's cut and blackened face, and shuddered as the groans of the wounded Indians in the passage came to her ears.

"Poor Marse Paul — my dear, good marster!" Gumbo murmured. "Is he gwine to die, Silberheels?"

As if in answer, Paul slowly opened his eyes, sighed deeply and attempted to arise.

"Thank God, he lives!" Marie cried.

"Ugh, he lives!" grunted the Shawnee. Then to Paul: "Lie still; White Eagle is weak and faint."

With another deep-drawn sigh, the Englishman turned his face toward Marie and asked faintly:

"You're unhurt?"

"I'm safe and sound, dear," she whispered. "Don't worry."

"And Gumbo and Silverheels?"

"They are both here."

The darky was crying for joy as he blubbered: "*I's* all right, Marse Paul — jes got a broke arm, an' a few cuts, an' scratches, an' strains, an' bruises, an' a few t'ings ob dat kind. I's gittin' 'long firs' rate, Marse Paul!"

"My red brother —" And Paul feebly stretched forth his hand — "you are still alive, but you are badly injured."

The Indian took the proffered hand as he replied: "Ugh! Silverheels is alive; the knives of the Delawares and Wyandots failed to find his heart. The Shawnee will live to send his enemies to the spirit-land!"

"And — and the battle — you beat them off?"

"Ugh! They are gone. But their dead and dying strew the floor of the cave."

"And will they renew the attack, my red brother?" Paul asked in a stronger voice.

The semblance of a grim smile twitched the corners of the Shawnee's mouth.

"The Delaware and Wyandot braves will not return. They will not again seek death in the dark-

ness. The blue-eyed maiden taught them a new lesson they will not soon forget."

"What do you mean?" Paul said with a show of animation, as he struggled to a sitting posture and supported his dizzy head upon his hand.

"Let the blue-eyed maiden herself explain," returned Silverheels, turning his back and striding toward the mouth of the cavern.

Marie, in few words, told her lover how she had dispersed the howling pack of human wolves. When she had finished, he replied, feelingly:

"My brave little woman! Surely God directed your act! Had it not been for you, not one of us would have lived to tell of the fight. As it is, we are in desperate straits. Should the Indians again attack us, God alone knows what the result will be, for we are too sorely wounded to defend ourselves against such odds. Nor are we in better condition to withstand a siege; we haven't enough meat remaining to last a day. However, I don't despair. Your prayers have proved of avail. God is with us. Hark! What's that?"

The three listened intently for a full minute.

"Guess you didn't hear nuffin' 'tall, Marse Paul," Gumbo remarked at last.

"But I *did*," Paul insisted; and, with Marie's aid, he got upon his feet and stood trembling by her side.

"Mus' ob been dem hurt Injins," the darky suggested.

Graydon shook his head: "No, it sounded like the murmur of many voices; and I think it came from the valley. Where's Silverheels?"

"At the mouth of the cavern," Marie answered.

"There it is again — and it's the sound of voices," Paul cried excitedly. "Go, Gumbo, and see what it means."

When the negro reached the shelf of rock at the outlet looking down upon the valley, he found Silverheels standing like a carved figure of stone, upon the outer edge of the projecting ledge, gazing fixedly toward the Indian lodges. A great stir and tumult was going on. Indians were pouring down from the ravine and hillside and gathering in circles around a group of horsemen. The strangers were wiry, muscular, dark-complexioned men, dressed in the motley but picturesque garb peculiar to the fur-traders and adventurers of the forest wilds. There were twelve of them; and, besides the horses they bestrode, they had with them a number of pack-horses.

The Delawares and Wyandots were much excited. They talked and gesticulated wildly, pointing toward the cave and the ravine, and shaking aloft their arms as they did so. The leader of the newcomers raised his hand and commanded silence. Then he called to him a number of the chiefs, and, dismounting, appeared to hold a consultation with them. Gumbo saw all this and his eyes bulged with curiosity and excitement.

"Who am dem folkses, Silberheels?" he asked in eager accents.

But the Shawnee did not deign to reply. On the contrary, leaving the negro staring after him, he returned to Paul and Marie.

"Help is at hand," he said abruptly.

Incredulity was depicted upon the young Englishman's countenance, as he replied:

"Help? I don't understand you."

"Black Jacques is in the village of the redmen."

"And who is Black Jacques, pray?"

"A Frenchman — a trader among the tribes. He is here with men and horses; he comes to barter for peltries."

"Will he interfere in our behalf?"

"Ugh! He is a friend of Silverheels; the Shawnee once saved his life."

At that moment Gumbo came hurrying toward them, his sable face shining with excitement.

"Dar's a man on horseback, right down at de foot ob de cliff," he cried; "an' he's gesticulatin' a white rag on a ramrod, an' denouncin' de fack dat he wants to hol' a parley wid some ob us! Come quick, Marse Paul, an' see!"

As rapidly as his enfeebled condition would permit, Paul, supported by Marie and his two comrades, hastened toward the mouth of the cave.

CHAPTER XXXII

HELLO! Hello, up there!" was the cry that floated up from the valley.

With shaking hands, Graydon parted the fringe of bushes upon the edge of the shelf of rock, and peered down upon the solitary horseman beneath.

"Hello!" the stranger shouted in a louder voice. His face upturned, he closely scanned the opening in the cliff, as he repeated his call. Paul saw the man was alone. Grasping the bushes firmly and bending forward, the young Englishman cried:

"Who are you, and what do you want?"

"I come with a flag of truce. The Indians desire to remove their dead and wounded from the cave. Will you permit them to enter and bear the bodies away?"

"What assurance have we that the savages aren't seeking an opportunity to renew the attack?"

"The word of a man who has never yet deceived another, no matter what was the color of his skin," returned the stranger. He spoke English well, but with a foreign accent.

"Wait a moment; I must consult with my comrades."

Paul withdrew his head, and, turning to Silverheels, said:

"You heard the stranger's request. What have you to say?"

The Shawnee was watching the movements of the Indians in the village; and he did not remove his eyes from them as he answered:

"Black Jacques speaks words of truth. He has not a split tongue."

"You know him," Paul said eagerly; "step out here and speak to him."

Silverheels, still looking toward the village, decidedly shook his head.

"You will not?" Paul asked in surprise, not unmixed with irritation.

"No," was the unmoved rejoinder.

"Why?"

"If Black Jacques wants to see the Shawnee, he will ask for him," Silverheels answered proudly.

"Perhaps he doesn't know you are with us."

"The Delawares and Wyandots have told him that their bitter enemy is in the cave. He knows the Shawnee is here. Silverheels has ears — he will answer when he hears his name."

With an impatient gesture, Paul returned to his former position and called to the horseman below:

"Tell the Delawares and Wyandots they may carry off their dead and wounded, if you and your men accompany them."

"Very well," the stranger answered; "you shall not have reason to regret your decision, young

man. Is a Shawnee Indian, called Silverheels, with you?"

"He is."

"Tell him to come to the mouth of the cave; Black Jacques desires to speak with him."

Paul stepped back a few paces, and Silverheels took his place. For several minutes the stranger conversed with him, in the guttural language of the Shawnee. Then Black Jacques wheeled his horse and galloped back to the motley assembly in the center of the Indian village; and Silverheels and his friends re-entered the cavern.

The Shawnee volunteered no information of what had passed between him and the stranger; but, stirring up the fire, unconcernedly, commenced to cook their midday meal of venison. A few minutes later, Black Jacques and two of his men, accompanied by a number of the Indians, entered the passage and began the removal of the dead and wounded savages. Five of the redmen were dead, three more were in a dying condition, and several others were so seriously wounded that they could not get away unaided. While his men and the Indians were engaged in this work of mercy, Black Jacques found his way into the main apartment of the cave.

He was a middle-aged man of medium height and weight, with strong, active limbs and erect carriage. His swarthy face, tanned a deeper shade by exposure to the elements, was smooth-shaven, wizened and leathery. His raven-black hair — without a trace

of gray in it — rippled down upon his square shoulders; and his beady black eyes roved restlessly. His dress of tanned buckskin was ornamented with beads and trinkets; and one side of his broad-rimmed hat was pinned up with a brooch of gold — while over the other side drooped a black plume. Besides the handsome rifle that he carried, he was armed with a brace of silver-mounted pistols and a jewel-hilted dagger.

On entering the presence of our friends, he walked up to Silverheels and, taking the latter's hand, said cordially:

"My Shawnee friend, many months have passed since last I saw you. At that time, you saved my life when your own tribe sought to take it. I need not recall the circumstance. Now I may be able to repay the debt. At any rate I will make the attempt. These are your friends?"

"Ugh!" grunted Silverheels, stooping to rescue a slice of venison that had dropped upon the coals.

Black Jacques turned to Paul and abruptly demanded his name.

"Paul Graydon," the young Englishman answered, half amused at the other's brusque manner.

"I find you in trouble. Tell me why you are here. The Indians have given me their version of the affair."

Paul complied with the fur-trader's request, giving a terse but graphic account of the attack upon Big Bottom, and subsequent events. When the

young man had finished, Black Jacques nodded his head vigorously several times, shrugged his shoulders and replied:

"Very good. But what motive had the outlaw in leading the Indians against the settlement?"

Paul explained fully, concealing nothing. The fur-trader plied his questions as one having authority, and the other did not think of refusing to answer. As the young man concluded, Black Jacques's eyes emitted sparks of anger and his chest heaved with suppressed emotion. He exclaimed hoarsely:

"Red Wallace! the infernal scoundrel! I know him — know him well. A merciless knave! But he has overshot the mark this time. He has tried double-dealing with the Indians. He lies a prisoner in the village; and they will burn him at the stake. Little's the pity! It will be a good riddance. Young man, you say your name is Paul Graydon?"

"My name is Paul Graydon."

"You are an American?"

"I am an Englishman by birth; but I have spent my life in Virginia."

"Ah!"

A scowl of dislike clouded the fur-trader's leathery face. He went on slowly:

"And *I* am a Frenchman; and I owe nothing to the English and Virginians but hate. The great sorrow of my life lies in the fact that I once visited Virginia. Who — who is this young woman?"

At that moment Marie, who had been standing in

the shadow, moved forward into the full light of the fire. The Frenchman started back as he caught sight of her face; and stammeringly asked the question.

"This is the young woman who was kidnaped," Paul explained.

"Yes — yes; I know. But who is she — where is she from?"

The fur-trader was becoming more and more agitated. He stared so hard at Marie that her eyes fell and her cheeks flushed. Her heart was beating wildly. She was strangely moved — she did not know why. Paul was half angry at what he considered the Frenchman's bold admiration of the golden-haired girl; and it was with scant courtesy that he replied:

"She, too, comes from Virginia; but what can it matter to you?"

"Much or little!" Black Jacques cried excitedly. Then, taking a step forward, he faced Marie and commanded:

"Tell me the truth, girl — tell me naught but the truth! You are from Virginia?"

"I am," Marie answered quietly, stepping a little nearer to Paul.

"From the Shenandoah!"

"Yes."

"And your name — quick, tell me your name!"

"Marie Fontanelle."

The leathery face became the color of old parch-

ment. Black Jacques stood with staring eyes and parted lips, trying to speak. But no sound issued from his throat. At last he found voice to say falteringly:

"Your — your mother is Ruth — Meeks!"

"Yes," Marie replied wonderingly, "but she is dead — she died at my birth."

"Dead — dead!" he murmured brokenly, as he bowed his head.

Paul placed an arm around the trembling form of his sweetheart, and regarded the Frenchman askance. The young Englishman thought the other daft. Gumbo, with open mouth, took in everything that was done and said, and — for a wonder — kept silent. The Shawnee coolly went on cooking venison, glancing from the corners of his eyes, at the others, without turning his head.

"And your father was Jacques Fontanelle, a French fur-trader!"

It was the Frenchman who spoke. Marie started and cried eagerly:

"Yes — yes! Have you known him? Tell me of him."

Very softly, very earnestly, he answered:

"Dear child, *I* am Jacques Fontanelle — *I am your father!*"

"What!" was the exclamation that burst from Paul's lips.

With the explosive expression — "Fo' de good

*'d's sake!" — Gumbo took a step backward, almost tumbling over the kneeling form of Silverheels.

"You cannot mean it!" Marie murmured, with one hand pressed to her heart. "You, my father?"

"Yes! Let me prove to you that I am Jacques Fontanelle. Here is a lock of your mother's hair that I have carried with me all the years since last I saw her. In color and texture, it matches your own. You are the image of your mother, my child. But your disposition is French. I was struck by the marked resemblance, as soon as I saw you. You know the tragedy of your parents' lives. I wandered into the Shenandoah valley; met and loved your mother, who was as beautiful as yourself. I married her. But when her relatives ascertained that I was a despised Frenchman, I was compelled to flee for my life. I left behind me my wife and unborn child, and returned to the lonely and hazardous life of a fur-trader among the Indians. Knowing that your mother's brothers — your uncles, Isaac, John and others — were ready and anxious to slay me, I never dared to return to the valley. *I,* who have courage enough to brave the dangers of the wilderness, have been too cowardly to face the men who unjustly deprived me of all I held dear!"

This last sentence he uttered with great bitterness and scorn. He continued:

"How I have suffered no one but my God knows! Sleeping and waking, your mother's tearful face

has been before me. A thousand times I have resolved to go back — to risk all for a glimpse of her. Each time fear overcame me — with shame I confess it! I have made a fortune in the fur trade. But until this hour it has meant nothing to me. Now — now — "

His voice faltered and broke. Tears came to his eyes and trickled down his leathery cheeks. Stretching forth his arms, he sobbed:

"Marie, my child, will you not come to me?"

She was trembling like a leaf, as she looked up into Paul's face for counsel. His voice choked with emotion, he said:

"He is your father!"

With a glad cry, she sprang into the outstretched arms; and for the first time Jacques Fontanelle held his child to his heart — sobbing until his wiry frame shook. Then he lifted her head and kissed her again and again; and, holding her at arm's length, murmured softly:

"How like your mother — how like your mother!"

Gumbo was wild with delight. He danced and capered around the cave, to the infinite disgust of the dignified Shawnee, who regarded him in much the same way that a sedate mastiff regards a sporti poodle.

"Kiyi!" the darky shouted. "If dis nigger isn't eberlastin'ly an' redickerlously kerflummixed, den he

doesn't know hisse'f — dat's all! Lawzee! but ol' Gumbo jes' feels like shoutin' halleluyer!"

Paul, his sweetheart, and her father seated themselves upon the stone floor and conversed in low tones. The noon hour was forgotten. They talked of the past and made plans for the future, forgetting that they were still in the heart of the wilderness, surrounded by savage foes. Marie shyly told her father that she loved Paul and was his affianced wife.

"You shall have the man of your choice, my daughter, even though that man is an Englishman," Jacques Fontanelle said, smiling sadly; "and if love and wealth count for aught, you shall be happy."

Then directing his words to Paul, he continued:

"I must go now to plead your cause with the Indians. You and your companions have slain a number of their young men; and the savages thirst for revenge. But I have great influence with them. I have traded with them for years, and have befriended them in many ways; I shall find some way to win them from their purpose. Keep close in the cave; do nothing to incite the red men to renew the attack. I shall return to you as soon as I have arranged matters with the chiefs of the tribes."

He spoke a few words to Silverheels in the Shawnee tongue, and left the cavern. Hour after hour passed. Our friends partook of the meat the Shawnee had cooked, and anxiously awaited the return of Marie's father. The sun sank behind the western

hills; and the stars again peeped into the wooded valley. But Jacques Fontanelle came not. Gumbo leaned against the rough wall and tenderly nursed his broken arm. Paul and Marie, in feverish anxiety, paced the uneven floor; and Silverheels moodily sat by the fire, stirring the warm ashes with the toe of his moccasin. At last a step was heard; and the next moment the fur-trader was among them. Throwing upon the smouldering fire the torch he carried, he said cheerily:

"It took time, but my persuasive powers proved irresistible. A liberal supply of ammunition, blankets, and trinkets, helped me to convince them that you have been sinned against more than you have sinned. Come, let's join my men in the village. The Indians have granted me the privilege of using the council lodge, until I am through trading with them. We'll take up our quarters there until we are ready to start for Detroit."

"Detroit?" Paul interrupted.

"Yes, my home is there; and you and my daughter are to accompany me to that place. Your black companion goes with you. As for your red friend, Silverheels" — and the fur-trader turned toward the Shawnee — "he returns to his lodge upon the Moose Eye. He understands all. He would not be safe in the village of his enemies, and he does not care to lower his dignity by going there. Silverheels, here is the ammunition I promised to bring

you. Ere the sun rises, you will be many miles from here. I bid you farewell."

Jacques Fontanelle took a brand from the fire, swung it around his head until it burst into flame, and, with the words, "Follow me," strode toward the passage leading to the ravine. Paul and Marie waited to bid Silverheels good-by; but the Shawnee muttered: "Not yet; I go a short distance with you."

When the party reached the middle of the passage, the Shawnee came to a sudden halt and said:

"Here we part. White Eagle and the blue-eyed maiden return to their people; the Shawnee goes back to his lonely lodge upon the Bald Eagle. Should we meet no more beneath the bright skies and by the rippling waters, we may meet no more forever; for the God of the paleface is not the redman's God. Be that as it may, the heart of Silverheels is glad that he has known and loved White Eagle. When the Shawnee sits by the red embers on a winter night, and hears the whistling blast among the trees, he will think of his white brother; and when the wild flowers again cover hillside and valley, the Shawnee's heart will be grieved that White Eagle is far away. My white brother, farewell!"

He took leave of Gumbo, Marie and her father first. The young woman wrung his hand and bade him a tearful good-by. Then he caught Paul's hand in a viselike grip and clung to it as though he could

not let it go. Paul could scarcely murmur his thanks for all the other had done for him.

Quickly Silverheels dropped the young man's hand; and, squeezing his body through a narrow cleft in the wall, was gone. He had taken the secret outlet, of which he had told his white friend, and of which no human being but himself knew.

The others accompanied the fur-trader to the Indian village and joined his men in the council lodge. There they found an abundance of food and a comfortable place to sleep. Paul had his wounds dressed by one of the French Canadians, who possessed some skill in surgery, and Gumbo had his broken arm splintered and bandaged.

For three days, Jacques Fontanelle and his party remained in the village of the Delawares and Wyandots, trading blankets, ammunition, beads and trinkets of many kinds, for peltries. On the day of their departure for Detroit, occurred an incident that is worth recording. The pack-horses were drawn up in line; the saddle-horses stood ready, when an Indian slipped to the Frenchman's side and told him Red Wallace wished to see him and his daughter before they left the village.

With some surprise and perturbation, the fur-trader took Marie by the hand and led her to the hut where the outlaw was confined. They found him lying upon the bare ground in a corner of the small room. His long, red hair was matted around his forehead and temples. His flabby face had lost its

ruddy glow and was pale and cadaverous. The corners of his sensual mouth drooped and his sunken eyes told of his base and cowardly fear of death.

The Indian who brought the father and daughter stood on guard at the door, while they were within.

"Come, fellow, be brisk," was Jacques Fontanelle's curt greeting; "we have no time to waste on such as you."

Wallace fastened his hollow eyes upon Marie's face, but said nothing:

"What do you want?" the fur-trader asked gruffly.

"Save me — save me! They will burn me at the stake!" gasped the cringing wretch.

"Is that all you want? We can do nothing for you — that you well know. Come, my daughter."

"Mercy!" the white lips whispered.

"You deserve no mercy! What mercy have you shown to others?" Jacques Fontanelle coolly replied.

He plucked Marie by the arm and started toward the door. She hesitated, and murmured the one word — "Father!"

"Well, child?"

"Stand in the door and engage the Indian's attention; I wish to speak to this man."

"Very well; but hurry."

As soon as her father had planted himself in the doorway, with his back toward her, she quickly drew from the bosom of her tattered gown the dagger she

had carried there for days. With a single sweep, she severed the thongs that bound the renegade's wrists; and, dropping the knife by his side, murmured:

"I return to you your weapon. Brutal, cowardly murderer that you are, you shall have a chance to fight for your life!"

Before he could recover from his surprise, she had passed from the cabin with her father. Keeping the divided cords about his wrists, and rolling over upon the knife to conceal it, Wallace lay perfectly quiet while the Indian guard came in and inspected the interior. After a cursory examination, the redman withdrew. Two hours later, when he again entered the hut, he found the outlaw a corpse. Feeling that final escape from the Indians was impossible, and fearing that death at the stake was inevitable, Red Wallace had plunged his dagger into his own heart!

CHAPTER XXXIII

THE warp has been laid; the woof is completed; and but a few scattered threads remain to be gathered and knotted.

Two weeks after their arrival in Detroit, Paul and Marie were quietly married. Jacques Fontanelle was a wealthy and liberal man, and wished to celebrate the marriage of his only child as befitted her station; but Marie would not have it so. And Marie's word was law in the household.

Paul prepared to engage in the fur-trade with his father-in-law; but soon the atmosphere along the border was pulsating with the pent power of the coming conflict between the white and red races; and the fur trade was unprofitable and unsafe. Black Jacques, with a lifelong experience of Indian treachery and cruelty, decided that there was nothing to do but to stay quietly in Detroit until the war was over.

There our friends remained for several years. During all this time they heard little of Marietta and the valley of the Muskingum, and nothing of Hester Lovelace. At last, there came a letter from a lawyer in Virginia — who had learned Graydon's address from a Virginian, who had returned from Detroit to

his native heath — stating that the young Englishman's cousin had died intestate, and requesting him to come home immediately and enter into possession of the vast property that was rightfully and legally his.

Jacques Fontanelle determined to dispose of his possessions and take up his residence with his children and grandchildren in the valley of the Shenandoah. One beautiful spring day they set out upon their long journey, provided with an ample escort for their comfort and safety. They went by way of Marietta, arriving there after a wearisome journey of many days. In the thriving village upon the banks of the Ohio and Moose Eye, Paul learned of the fate of Hester.

While Red Wallace was gone upon his final mission to the Delawares and Wyandots, in burning expectancy she waited for the consummation of her vengeance. Day by day, when recovering from a violent attack of coughing, she would wipe the bloody froth from her pallid lips, and whisper:

'Oh, that he would hurry! I fear that I shall die ere my stroke of vengeance falls!"

At last, came the news of the massacre at Big Bottom — the startling tidings that surprised and horrified everyone but herself. Mr. Gosney and good wife, with whom she lived, were frightened; and with many others sought safety within the sheltering walls of Campus Martius. When they begged her to accompany them, she sneeringly re-

fused. None knew so well as she that no attack would be made upon Marietta. Alone she sat by the fire in the cabin, and chuckled and muttered in diabolical glee:

"'Tis done! She is lost to him forever! I am revenged upon him. He has gone to search for her; and he will return a broken-hearted man. Ah! sweet is revenge! When he comes to me to seek consolation — as he will — I shall mock him; for I hate him — I hate him! No — no! God help me! I love him still!"

She bowed her face upon her transparent hands and was silent for some moments. Then she continued to commune with herself:

"'Tis done — but at what a cost! The guilt of murder rests upon my soul. No! he alone is to blame! Paul is to blame. He drove me to madness. I was mad — mad! And I'm in that base renegade's power — I must marry him. Marry him? No! No! I shall escape him. A few short weeks and I shall be the bride of Death! And must I lose Paul, after all! Oh! empty, worthless and pitiable vengeance is, when the heart is starving for love!" And she burst into a fit of weeping.

"Lost — lost!" she muttered. "I have played the game through and have lost all. It is all false. My revenge is false — bitter and false. No — it's not so! I am happy — I am elated — I am in an ecstacy of delight! Have I not accomplished my

purpose? God help me! I cannot deceive myself — I am wretched, friendless, alone!"

She arose and glanced hurriedly around, as though expecting some dread presence.

"I must hurry — I must escape!" she faintly whispered. "Wallace will be here soon to claim his own. When he comes I must be gone. And I shall never see Paul again! I am going back home — to the dear old home — to die!"

A few days later, notwithstanding the protestations of her friends, she joined a small party of returning emigrants; and, consuming with feverish haste and excitement, set out for home. But she was not again permitted to see the sun rise above the tops of the Blue Ridge and light up the grand old valley of the Shenandoah. One night her party stopped at a little wayside tavern in the mountains. Before morning, she was taken with a profuse hemorrhage, and died. Her kind-hearted companions buried her in a lonely place upon the mountain side; and pushed on toward their destination. Years afterward, Paul Graydon found her grave and marked the spot with a marble shaft. Poor Hester Lovelace!

* * * * * * *

When Jacques Fontanelle and his party arrived in Marietta, Marie hurried to the blockhouse, expecting to find her friend still there. What was her disappointment to learn that Governor St. Clair and his children had gone back to their farm in Penn-

sylvania! The old soldier, defeated and disgraced, and openly scorned by those who once had fawned upon him, had retired to the privacy of his home, a broken man.

For years after her mother died, Louise was her father's housekeeper, his adviser and comforter. Long years after the time of which we write, she and Marie again met and renewed their early friendship.

Paul found Prince, his noble black horse, in the keeping of Colonel Sproat, where Governor St. Clair had placed the animal. It was hard to tell which was more overjoyed at the meeting — the horse or his master.

No one could give our friends tidings of Silverheels. For a time after his return from the Tuscarawas, he occupied his lodge upon the Moose Eye at the Mouth of the Bald Eagle. When the Indian war came on, he disappeared; and, at the time of their visit to Marietta, he had not returned. It was a source of bitter disappointment to Paul, that he could not again meet his red brother ere leaving the Northwest Territory, for Virginia.

If — as local tradition records — the Shawnee at last came back to the bonny Muskingum, to wreak his vengeance upon those who had buffeted and debased him, it but shows one side of his red nature; and if he stoically met death at the hands of a cowardly assassin, it reveals another. The incon-

trovertible fact remains, that he never forgot a friend nor forgave an enemy. He had in him the blood of two races — but he was a Shawnee!

(THE END.)